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President: Mr. Jeremić ..... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 9.25 a.m.

High-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons

Agenda item 103 (*continued*)

Crime prevention and criminal justice

The President: I declare open the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, held in accordance with Assembly resolutions 64/293, of 30 July 2010; 67/190, of 20 December 2012; and 67/260, of 1 May 2013.

By its resolution 64/293, the General Assembly adopted the Global Plan of Action and reaffirmed commitments to end the heinous crime of trafficking in persons. Member States, inter alia, resolved to undertake concrete steps to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims, and prosecute such crimes. The Plan also called for integrating the fight against human trafficking into the work and programmes of the United Nations system in order to boost development and strengthen security.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all participants to the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the appraisal of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

At the outset, allow me to pay special tribute to the survivors who are joining us today. Their courage commands profound respect, and their fortitude should be a source of inspiration for us all. We highly appreciate their taking part in the afternoon panel discussions, together with some of the world's foremost activists — men and women who have devoted their careers to putting an end to this appalling form of modern-day slavery.

I am indebted to our co-facilitators for this event, the Permanent Representative of Austria, Mr. Martin Sajdik, and the Permanent Representative of Cape Verde, Mr. Antonio Pedro Monteiro Lima. I wholeheartedly thank them for their dedication and hard work.

I would also like to acknowledge the essential role of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and its Executive Director, Mr. Yury Fedotov, in helping us organize today's meeting, and for their ongoing role in coordinating the international community's response to human trafficking.

Last but not certainly least, I would also like to express my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his strong leadership in the fight against this heinous crime and for his robust support for the implementation of the Plan of Action.

Human trafficking has developed into a global criminal enterprise that generates an estimated $32 billion in illicit revenue each year. Today perhaps as many as 25 million persons are victims of this barbarity.

The Plan of Action was put in place by the General Assembly to bring human trafficking to an end. It was designed to enhance international coordination

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to protect and assist victims, prosecute alleged perpetrators and strengthen the relevant partnerships between Governments, civil society, media and the private sector.

The Plan of Action also provides a framework for how the fight against human trafficking can be properly integrated into the longer-term comprehensive strategy of the United Nations. I personally believe that this should become an integral part of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which will undoubtedly frame much of the work of the United Nations for decades to come.

Virtually every nation across the globe has been exposed to this atrocious practice, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination. Resolution 67/190, which was adopted last December, indicates that despite the sustained measures taken at the international, regional and national levels, trafficking in persons remains one of the world's grimmest challenges.

That was also a central conclusion of the Interactive Dialogue on the Prevention of Human Trafficking, held in the General Assembly last April. It underscored the fact that a more concerted and comprehensive global response is required if we are to address what one victims' rights advocate called a "pandemic" in a more effective manner.

Today's high-level meeting provides us with an opportunity to assess how much progress has been achieved in building up the four pillars of the Plan of Action, namely, prevention, protection, prosecution and partnership, as well as explore ways to strengthen the role and capacity of UNODC in helping to implement it.

Participants will also have a chance to present concrete ideas about how to improve international cooperation in this field. In addition, they will be able to consider how to improve the effectiveness of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which was established by this body during its sixty-first session.

As President of the General Assembly, allow me to extend an appeal not only to Member States, but also to philanthropic organizations and the private sector, to increase their support for the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Created by the Secretary-General, it provides indispensable humanitarian, legal and financial aid for those most directly affected by this modern-day version of slavery.

I believe that we must place the victims of human trafficking at the centre of our work. No effort must be spared to bring to an end the servitude of millions while helping the survivors to rebuild their lives. To achieve that, law enforcement officials, border control officers, labour inspectors, consular and embassy officials, judges, prosecutors and peacekeepers must not only increase their vigilance but be further sensitized to the needs of victims. They should also come to work more closely with social service providers and other caregivers.

In the past few years, 154 Member States have become party to the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which is the first global, legally binding instrument on that critically important issue. I respectfully urge Member States that have not yet done so to ratify it at the earliest opportunity.

In coming to the end of my remarks, allow me to express my gratitude to Ms. Mira Sorvino, the United Nations Goodwill Ambassador against Human Trafficking, for her relentless efforts to rid the world of that atrocious practice. On 6 June 2012, just two days before I was elected President of the General Assembly, I had the privilege of hearing her speak in this very Hall, at the invitation of my predecessor, the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser. I remember that she talked of the survivors she had met over the course of her work, recalling harrowing stories of their terrible ordeals. Near the end of her remarks, she made a heartfelt appeal to the audience and said:

> "I hope that all of you here present will generate a sea change in your own countries and help bring human trafficking to an end in our lifetime".

Let us wholeheartedly support that earnest entreaty and have it become our clarion call to action. Let us stand as one on this and purge the globe of this horrendous affront to human dignity.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon.

The Secretary-General: I thank all present for coming together to stop the scandal of human

trafficking. I highly appreciate the initiative of the President of the General Assembly in bringing all of us together to address the very important and very serious global challenge of human trafficking.

Around the world, traffickers victimize defenceless and vulnerable people. Earlier this month, authorities in Yemen freed about 500 Ethiopian migrants who had been trapped by traffickers. The victims were mostly women and girls. I was deeply disturbed to hear that many had been tortured or abused. Of course, we know that millions of others experience similar ordeals. Human trafficking devastates individuals and undermines national economies. Billions of dollars are generated through exploitation and abuse. Those black market funds support illegal drugs, corruption and other crimes.

The United Nations is bringing partners together to protect the victims, prosecute the traffickers and end this trade in humans. There are three critical steps to advance this life-saving cause.

First is the universal ratification of important treaties. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, already has more than 150 States parties. I urge all others to join and to become party to the international pacts against trafficking, corruption and slavery, as well as treaties that protect human rights, especially the rights of women and children.

Second is the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Our comprehensive set of recommendations attacks the problem from many angles.

Third are contributions to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, to help victims take back their lives and build new futures. I thank all those who have already donated, and I urge others to give generously to that important Fund.

Human trafficking is a vicious chain that binds victims to criminals. We must break that chain with the force of human solidarity. In that effort, we have to listen to the voices of the victims. Recently, the International Labour Organization interviewed hundreds of them. One young woman described how her employer broke her arm and then locked her in a room with a camera. He threatened to tell the authorities that she was stealing from him so they would throw her in jail. When the torture was finally over, she said simply: "I want to prosecute my employer. I want him to be judged for what he did to me." We must heed that call for justice and the many others from victims around the world. We will never succeed in preventing trafficking unless we end impunity.

To achieve justice, we need a strong foundation in the rule of law. That will require putting a stop to the corruption that pollutes so many transactions. We have to strengthen judicial systems and help Governments earn the trust of their people. More broadly, we have to raise living standards. Human trafficking thrives in conditions of poverty. People are lured from their homes by promises of wealth and security. In some of the most tragic cases, parents sell their children for a pittance in a desperate bid to survive.

The good news is that we have a road map to the future we want. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) constitute the largest and most successful anti-poverty campaign in history. We must do everything possible to reach the MDGs before the 2015 deadline. Success in that will add momentum to our work to craft a post-2015 development agenda.

I count on all participants here today to be part of our work to end human trafficking and to create a world where people's basic needs are met and their fundamental rights are respected.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Yury Fedotov, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Mr. Fedotov (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime): I would like to echo your words, Mr. President, and those of the Secretary-General in highlighting the importance of this high-level meeting. The event is indeed timely. It has been 10 years since the entry into force of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We are also three years into the life of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Today's forum offers a welcome opportunity for us to review

achievements, examine challenges and chart a decisive course of further action.

Although so much of human trafficking remains hidden, we know that the international community is dealing with a crime that stretches across the globe. This modern form of slavery creates millions of victims, and their suffering creates billions of dollars for criminals. So far, 175 States are party to the Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and 154 to its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Fifteen countries have ratified the Protocol since the Global Plan of Action was adopted in 2010. I call on all Member States that have not done so to ratify and fully implement the Convention and the Protocol.

The Global Plan of Action mandates the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to report on human trafficking in order to help us better understand this global problem and strengthen our collective response to it. We produced a report in December that was subsequently discussed at a special meeting in New York. The report makes clear that we are dealing with a twenty-first-century crime — adaptive, cynical, sophisticated, and present in developed and developing countries alike.

Against that background, I should like to provide a three-part evaluation of the Global Plan, assessing what we have achieved, what the challenges are and what kind of road lies ahead.

First, with regard to the achievements, today 83 per cent of countries have proper legislation for combating human trafficking. In 2009, before the Global Plan, the figure was only 60 per cent. What is encouraging is that the number of countries in Africa and the Middle East that have introduced anti-human-trafficking legislation has doubled during the past three years. In terms of the response of criminal justice, the number of convictions worldwide has also increased. Indeed, 25 per cent of countries reported a marked increase in convictions over recent years. The remaining countries viewed the situation as stable.

Turning to the challenges, the Protocol must still be ratified by 39 Member States from around the world to reach universal implementation. Impunity is another issue. Sixteen per cent of countries have never recorded a single conviction for human trafficking. Overall conviction rates are still low. Nor has the Inter-agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT) reached full engagement. At present, the Working Group of that body, which is open to all, includes only six United Nations agencies. There are also problems with data collection and analysis. The 2012 Global Report contained information collected from 132 Member States. That means that 61 countries provided no information at all for the report. And, perhaps most important, the Victims Trust Fund created under the Global Plan has not been used to its full potential, due to a lack of adequate financing. Although we have started to help victims of human trafficking through the 11 grass-roots non-governmental organizations, at the moment we cannot undertake a new call for proposals.

For those reasons, the Global Plan of Action has taken significant steps forward. But to truly deliver on our mandate, we need, first, universal ratification and implementation of the Convention and its Protocol by Member States. Secondly, we need greater commitment on the part of all ICAT partners to dedicating time and resources to its activities. Thirdly, we need fresh contributions to the Trust Fund from both Governments and other actors; and fourthly, we need comprehensive data in order to understand the nature of this global crime better.

Between 2006 and 2009, the number of detected cases of human trafficking for forced labor doubled, from 18 to 36 per cent, showing that law-enforcement bodies are taking action against that crime more often. However, we cannot afford to rest on previous successes. Thirty-six per cent is still too low, and we must aim much higher. If I could emphasize one particular area, it would be the need for deeper international cooperation. Success against traffickers can come only if we engage more fully with the mechanisms of cooperation. We need more sharing of best practices, more mutual legal assistance, more joint operations across borders, national strategies on human trafficking linked to regional and international approaches, as well as the cooperation of key stakeholders such as civil society, the private sector and the media.

Three years ago. the Global Plan of Action gave the international community a powerful sense of direction in the fight against human trafficking. We now need to recalibrate our approach, but it is a question of simply adjusting our current direction, not of throwing away the compass. The goal remains the same. We must rid the world of the suffering caused by human trafficking. In our modern societies, human trafficking is often a well-hidden crime; however, the good news is that it is

now clearly visible on the radar screens of Governments, international organizations, civil society, the business community and the media.

Throughout the world, we stand in an alliance across borders and politics, due to a shared desire to reject this heinous crime. In that spirit of unity, let me suggest what I believe is perhaps an inspirational but still a realistic goal — a decade of concrete action to eradicate this disgusting form of transnational organized crime from every country and every region. Let us do it, not only for those who are alive today, but also for the generations of women, children and men who will follow.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Mira Sorvino, United Nations Goodwill Ambassador against Human Trafficking.

Ms. Sorvino, United Nations Goodwill Ambassador against Human Trafficking: I am extremely honoured to be here today, as I have been honoured to be the Goodwill Ambassaador against Human Trafficking for the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) since 2009. I have travelled worldwide with the United Nations Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking; I have met with Government officials, workers from non-governmental organizations and members of law enforcement; I have interviewed scores of survivors of modern-day slavery and one trafficker. I have worked with the UNODC field office in South-East Asia. I have met children rescued from brothels in Mexico City; seen a survivor tremble because her place of captivity had been one block from my London hotel; conferred with Spanish ministers; and interviewed Filipino labour victims — trafficked to a California elder-care facility — being aided by one of the small-grant recipients of the Voluntary Trust Fund for the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking.

I am also, I believe, the only Goodwill Ambassador ever to have been present at a United Nations drafting session — that of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Some here may recall my impudence and lack of diplomacy as I argued passionately for the creation of the Trust Fund. I begged for swift passage of the Plan and the Fund because, as I said then, the victims cannot wait another minute; they need these now, they needed them yesterday, they needed them two years ago. So I will once again leave the diplomacy to my betters and speak to the Assembly from the heart.

In my official capacity, and as a private advocate for victims of modern-day slavery, I have been reduced to tears by stories that survivors have entrusted to me. My heart has bled over accounts of murders — of children thrown off boats, of women burned alive in dance clubs in Spain — of rapes, of scarrings of young women branded with irons on their faces to keep them in line with their traffickers' wishes, of beatings endured; the complete denial of people's human rights and personhood by their exploiters, their relegation to things expendable.

I have also noted in every country — including my own, the United States — that on the whole, although some great strides have been made in modern-day abolitionism, members of society, the Government, law enforcement and the media vastly underestimate the severity of the problem. Many people that human trafficking exists, but not here, thereby strengthening the traffickers' foothold. As Mr. Fedotov said, from 2007 to 2010, 16 per cent of 132 countries reported zero convictions of traffickers, and some countries' annual convictions have recently decreased.

The likelihood of this extremely lucrative crime going away by itself is not realistic. In every setting, legislation needs strengthening, and most importantly, implementation on the ground allays nothing unless it is put into action and helps rescue victims and punish perpetrators. The crime is not assigned high value by law enforcement, partially due to the lack of crucial training in the subject which everywhere, once implemented, begins to undo traffickers' impunity and raise the number of victims rescued.

Responses are vastly underfunded. Victims are missed due to weak national referral mechanisms. When discovered, they are often treated as criminals and denied the crucial period of reflection that the Global Plan mandates for them. Infrastructure to assist them post-discovery is insufficient to non-existent. There are no beds for victims. There is no place to take them when they are discovered. There is no money to give them the services they need for rehabilitation.

Little is done to deter the demand side, both for sexual exploitation, which creates an enormous market for forced adult and underage trafficking victims, and for labour, the fruits of which stain most of the products that we buy, which is why Ms. Nafis Sadik, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, speaking in Baku, Azerbaijan, at a forum on human trafficking last week,

urged that pressure be brought to bear on big business to eliminate human trafficking in their supply chains, giving the traffickers nowhere to park their humans.

I have seen the incredible difference that one individual's determination can make against the scourge. I have been moved and inspired by the survivors who have graced me with their testimonies, having endured some of the worst that humanity has to offer. Somehow they are filled with clarity, hope and the conviction that they can change the equation for those still labouring under the heavy yoke of modern day slavery. If they can, how can we not?

Man is a brutal animal. Our cruelty and use of intelligence to dominate and exploit others of our own kind is second to none in the natural world. But is it not the very purpose of this gathered body of nation-leaders — nation-builders — to guide us to something more than that base brutality, to more than that failure of empathy which allows some men to sell and others to buy the bodies of children who have not even reached kindergarten age for sex?

What are we? How dare we care ourselves civilized if a vast economic market flourishes on our watch, trading in misery, the stunting of lives, minds, hopes and dreams, from the small to the adult, so that we the consumers may enjoy cheaply made products? The corporations who have contracted to third parties, the complicit police and even Government officials enjoy massive cash profits off of goods created by slave labour or of falsified or inherited debt bondage.

We must not allow money and markets to trump our morality. A free market economy is a misnomer if the vast majority of the products and services traded therein are tainted by slavery. As I said in Baku, if a mother is only as happy as her unhappiest child — and as a mother of four, I know whereof I speak — then a country, a union of countries or a planet, is only as well off as its most abused, exploited or vulnerable inhabitants.

It is now time for each and every representative in this Hall — I know that this is a big thing for me to ask — and for us all to know that slavery exists out there and is going on full-throttle while we enjoy the comforts of one of the greatest cities and organizations in the world, and that people are living in misery out there with no hope of freedom at present. It is time for everyone here to make this his or her personal quest as well. Each can move mountains within their own regions, invigorate their populaces with rousing dialogues about what they have uncovered and will tolerate no longer — that their lands will no longer be havens for those who peddle in the destruction of lives.

The General Assembly has ratified the formidable Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. Now, the Assembly's members must become its foot soldiers, generals and commanders-in-chief by stepping up every aspect of education, legislation, training for law enforcement and the judicial, defensive and prosecutorial arms of the law, as well as all levels of civil society, from teachers to social workers to members of the travel and tourism industry, first responders, foster care and the medical profession.

They will make sure that hotlines and swift help are readily available for victims who need them and that the infrastructure exists to rebuild the lives of those who have been rescued; and that investments are made in the villages that allowed those individuals to be conned or sold into slavery in the first place in the hopes of a better life. Members will form public-private partnerships, Government and non-government actors working hand in glove together in a victim-centred approach. They will go after big business and demand that humanity, not the profit motive, be the first priority in their countries. They will want to lead societies that are comprised of truly free citizens ready to contribute their part to a great common future, and they will not condone choosing the lowest bidder offering slave labour to fulfil a contract so that goods come in cheaply.

Let us not give the traffickers a place to park their humans. Let us give them a place to park themselves — maximum security prisons with lengthy sentences commensurate with those for the other most severe crimes. Let us invite survivors to all aspects of the fight. They are the truest experts on this issue and should be their own voice. Let us educate our children, and especially our girls, so they have alternatives to being swept up by traffickers into a sea of anonymous suffering, many never to be seen again by their loved ones.

Ultimately, our goal is to stop trafficking before it happens, not just to help those victims we can find and do damage-control after the fact. Human trafficking is one of the great social justice issues of our time. The most marginalized members of our societies — children, women, those without nationality or birth registration, the impoverished, undereducated, refugees displaced

by conflict or natural disasters, and villages where generations are born into inherited debt — are being preyed upon by criminals who count on our consumer culture. But we at the United Nations need to absolutely and immediately revalorize the preciousness of those lives that are being destroyed and lost, and to choose humanity over consumption and love over greed.

The latest UNODC report shows that the percentage of child victims has grown to 27 per cent; in some regions that statistic is significantly higher. In the Middle East and Africa, children constitute 68 per cent of the total number of victims. All of those children maimed and forced into begging, who have been violated by sexual predators or whose eyesight and backs have been stunted by labouring in sweatshops or whose organs have been harvested — which occurs in 16 countries — are all of our children. They could at any point be our children. Any of our children could fall prey to those crimes. And to abandon them is sacrilege no matter what religion or culture we hail from.

Lastly, if we are to look ourselves in the mirror and own what we see, let us put our money where our mouths are. Why have donations to the Fund on such a crucial issue been so few and far between by Member States, and some pledges made have yet to be fulfilled? I have seen the immense good that one small grant has done for scores of survivors. Imagine the exponential boon if the Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking grew — what we could do with those resources, how many more lives could be saved, how many more criminals could be punished, how we could start to change the culture of trafficking.

Those victims waiting to reclaim their place in the sun wait for all representatives here to open their hearts and their nations' checkbooks in order to give them their lives back. I ask everyone to please give generously and encourage others in their midst, both governmental and in the private sector, to do the same. Together, they can put an end to slavery.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Alyse Nelson, President of Vital Voices Global Partnership, which enjoys consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.

Ms. Nelson (Vital Voices Global Partnership): Nearly two decades ago, a group of Ukrainian women leaders approached our organization. They told us that their granddaughters were disappearing — gone without a trace. It was a tragedy back then — one which, quite frankly, had no name. Back then, there were no laws against human trafficking. There was very little awareness. There were certainly no international forums like this one around the issue.

Seventeen years later, I have to say that I am absolutely overwhelmed by how much has changed. Today, more than 130 countries around the globe have laws against human trafficking. The issue has united us across cultures, generations, institutions and sectors. Thanks to leaders in this Hall, the issue is precisely where it belongs — at the highest level of international cooperation.

But even with all that awareness, even with all that power and momentum, one question remains. Why is it that we have not been able to stem the rising tide of human trafficking? Why is it that those laws go unimplemented, unenforced, not taken seriously? Why is it that more people today than at any other time in history are enslaved?

The traffickers are smart. They are highly motivated. They are nimble. They adapt. I wonder if we are unable to get ahead of them because our tactics have not changed.

The treaties and resolutions implemented on the global scale are certainly what have got us to the place where we are today. But I am here to tell the Assembly that if we are to move forward, it is going to require further implementation and intervention. What we are doing on the global stage is not enough. We need to connect our top-down efforts and approach with bottom-up networks.

Mr. Kamau (Kenya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Yes, trafficking is a global crime, but it has local roots. If we want to live in a world free from slavery, we must harness the power of local solutions and the fearless innovators who lead them. One such leader is Sunitha Krishnan. From her base in Hyderabad, India, she is in the vanguard of a survivor-centred movement to prevent and respond to human trafficking. Sunitha connects with survivors of violence and exploitation because she is one. She is the most resilient, unstoppable woman whom I know. At her organization, Prajwala, she leads a team of 218 people, 60 per cent of whom are survivors. Over two decades, she has rescued 2,800 women, girls and boys. She runs 18 schools in highly vulnerable neighbourhoods to keep those children out

of harm's way. Through a partnership with the private sector, she is creating jobs for thousands of survivors so that they do not end up in that ongoing cycle of exploitation. One million eight hundred thousand men have signed on to her campaign to reduce demand. She has trained 25,000 police officers, judges and prosecutors and, in 2012 alone, her efforts helped secure 95 convictions. This woman is disrupting the cycle of exploitation. Sunitha has been beaten 19 times. The traffickers have filed litigation against her. But still she persists. Sunitha will tell all of us that we need to meet human trafficking where it lies: at the local level.

I commend the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its efforts in establishing and developing the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund to help scale and replicate those locally sourced solutions — like what Sunitha is doing in India. But I can tell the Assembly, as the Goodwill Ambassador said, this effort needs far more support and attention from all of us.

When he launched the Global Plan of Action, the Secretary-General wisely called for more information so that we would be better informed to establish global policies to understand this crime. He also called for innovative ideas in preventing it. Who better to advise us on the complexities and gaps in current policies, as well as on creative solutions, than those people on the front lines of change, those survivors who have dedicated their lives to ending this?

Today I would like to respectfully request that the United Nations establish a formal mechanism or advisory board to engage the voices of victims. I know that if Sunitha were here today she would remind us to be bold and disruptive in our thinking. But she would also remind us of the power of engaging all voices.

There is tremendous influence in this Hall to make a difference. But the only way we can truly capitalize on our power is to connect with the grass roots, with those survivors who are on the front lines of change. It has been an honour to be here today to represent their voices and the voices of civil society. I thank the Assembly for its efforts, and please know that we are here to work in partnership.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for the opening of the high-level meeting. Before we proceed with the list of speakers, I would like to turn to some organizational matters pertaining to the conduct of the plenary meetings meeting.

We turn first to the length of statements. I would like to remind members that statements should not exceed five minutes. In the light of that time frame, I would like to appeal to speakers to deliver their statements at a normal speed so that interpretation may be properly provided. To assist speakers in managing their time, a light system has been installed in the speaker's rostrum. May I appeal to all speakers for their cooperation in observing the length of the time limits for statements.

I would also like to remind representatives that we will have a photo session at some point. Photos of speakers delivering statements in the plenary of the General Assembly are routinely taken and are available for download in high resolution from the United Nations website www.unmultimedia.org/photo. That information is available from the Secretariat. Such photographs are also available for the United Nations Photo Library, located in Room S-1047 of the Secretariat Building.

The Assembly will now move on to the list of speakers.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jean Asselborn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg.

Mr. Asselborn (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): The past two centuries saw the abolition of slavery. Our century must put an end to trafficking in persons, which, at this very moment, on every continent, keeps millions of children, men and women in a state of servitude. The United Nations must play its full role in this new fight. Today's high-level meeting gives us an excellent opportunity to evaluate the progress made through the United Nations Global Plan of Action against Trafficking in Persons, adopted in July 2010.

I would like to thank the Permanent Representatives of Austria and Cape Verde for having facilitated the preparations for this important meeting. The United Nations Global Plan of Action is part of the range of actions taken by the United Nations to eradicate this scourge, including the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which supplements the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. This year we mark the tenth anniversary of the entry into force of the Protocol, which has now been ratified, as the Secretary-General just recalled, by more than 150 countries.

However, in spite of the ongoing commitment on the part of the international community, trafficking in persons remains a problem of a global scale, which, unfortunately, is far from being eradicated. According to the International Labour Organization, approximately 21 million people around the world are currently subjected to forced labour. Among them, there are 2.5 million victims of human trafficking. Women pay the highest price, representing 60 per cent of the victims of trafficking. If we add the 17 per cent of under-age girls and 10 per cent of boys to that figure, we see that it is the most vulnerable who are the primary victims. Criminals motivated by profit unscrupulously exploit the innocence and trust of children and make a business out of the hope for a better life of men and women. Such injustice should be abhorrent to us.

These human beings are subjected to a range of forms of exploitation, which may vary according to the region in which they take place. In Europe and in the Americas, the driving force behind human trafficking is sexual exploitation; in Africa and the Middle East, it is primarily forced labour. Trafficking in organs and the forced recruitment of soldiers are other engines behind this modern form of slavery. Despite the variety of situations I have noted, no country is safe from the scourge. Each one has a role to play, whether as a country of origin, transit or destination. That is why our actions must focus on several perspectives while adopting a regionally, community- and internationally based approach.

It is therefore essential that all States Members of the United Nations join in the fight against human trafficking and ratify and implement, as a matter of a priority, the the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

For its part, Luxembourg adopted, in July 2012, and ratified, in September 2012, the second Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which completes our national legal framework to combat human trafficking.

The *2012 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, provides us with very useful information on the characteristics and flows of human trafficking by region. One of the lessons of the report is that the majority of persons trafficked remain in the same region. It is therefore important for regional organizations to be equally involved in the fight against human trafficking and assume their responsibilities in that regard.

The observer of the European Union will later outline the measures adopted within the European Union. Allow me, therefore, to mention only the Union's strategy to eradicate human trafficking for the period 2012-2016. That strategy is based on five priorities, the first being protection and assistance to victims. Victims must be at the heart of any policy to combat human trafficking. They require support to overcome the physical and psychological effects and must be provided with medical care and treatment and appropriate psychological support.

In that context, allow me also to commend the very important work done by civil society. Of course, that work must continue to be integrated into our efforts in this forum. In the context of human trafficking, assistance to victims and their reintegration require the financial support of Member States. Since its launching, in November 2010, my country was among the first to provide financial support to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Trafficking in persons is a complex transnational phenomenon, with multiple causes, that has always relied upon the vulnerability of its victims. Such vulnerability may be rooted in poverty, gender inequality and multiple other forms of discrimination. It may be exacerbated by a conflict situation — as in the case of children recruited as soldiers or used as sexual slaves — or in a post-conflict situation, where women and children are often left to their own fate.

I hope that the discussions resulting from this high-level meeting will promote further progress on the best means to combat the heinous reality of human trafficking.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Armen Gevorgyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Territorial Administration of Armenia.

Mr. Gevorgyan (Armenia): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this important event. I would also like to thank the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its work in the fight against trafficking in persons.

Armenia was among the countries that at the outset supported the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. It is worth mentioning that most of the actions foreseen in the Global Plan have been implemented by Armenia through its national programmes.

More than a decade ago, the Armenian Government declared the fight against human trafficking as a priority. In that time, it has initiated reforms at the national level and widely cooperated with the international organizations active in the field. My country engages in productive cooperation with such organizations and takes consistent steps aimed at fully implementing its international commitments. All of the anti-trafficking activities carried out in Armenia are supervised by the State council on combating trafficking in persons. Our structural approach is based on establishing cooperation among all agencies and stakeholders dealing with this phenomenon. The council greatly appreciates the work of the relevant non-governmental organizations and international organizations present in Armenia. The anti-trafficking activities implemented in Armenia are based on the "three Ps" approach, namely, prevention, prosecution, protection and their corollaries.

The main goal of our first and second national action plans was to create the required legislative framework, along with the implementation of preventive activities, including carrying out assistance and protection projects for victims of trafficking. Since 2010, those activities have mainly aimed at maximum enhancement of the State's efforts — especially in the areas of prevention and assistance — by establishing and strengthening the necessary structural, legislative and financial basis and by promoting capacity-building for those active on the issue.

During the past decade, Armenia has drastically improved its national legislation in order to increase the effectiveness of its efforts to combat all types of trafficking in persons. Our amended criminal code, with new laws and regulations, has allowed for a more inclusive code, including strict oversight as well as the prosecution of traffickers and assistance to the victims of trafficking.

In the area of victim protection, the Government of Armenia has approved a national referral mechanism on trafficked persons. The relevant document defines the cooperation framework under which State governing bodies carry out their responsibilities in terms of the protection and enhancement of the rights of trafficked persons. In ensuring strategic cooperation with civil society in the course of its activities, the mechanism focuses on identifying effective ways to provide services to victims of trafficking, including providing shelter, access to professional medical and psychological assistance, counselling and educational and training programmes.

I would like to stress our deep conviction that the rights of the victims of this terrible crime should be at the centre of all anti-trafficking initiatives. That is why my Government is trying to apply a victim-oriented and victim-centred approach in designing its relevant national initiatives and in cooperating with other countries, in particular countries of destination.

Combatting child trafficking — a new and unacceptable challenge for my country — is one of the most important issues at the top of Armenia's agenda today. Labour trafficking is another relatively new development. My country is now initiating a research process to identify the root causes, threats and real scale of those problems.

The Government of Armenia is strongly committed to continuing its efforts at both the national and international levels. In that respect, I would like to thank our international partners for supporting the anti-trafficking activities being implemented by Armenia.

In conclusion, allow me to emphasize the importance of close cooperation among countries at regional and international levels in order to achieve greater progress in the implementation and further development of the respective provisions of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Eero Heinaluoma, Speaker of the Parliament of Finland.

Mr. Heinaluoma (Finland): This high-level meeting is a significant step forward in the fight against trafficking in persons. I would like to thank the organizers and the Secretary General for their commitment to combat trafficking.

As politicians and political decision-makers, we must acknowledge that the problem of trafficking is much more severe than we thought decades ago. It is a problem affecting nearly 20 million people daily, which means that we have to take it very seriously. Trafficking

in human beings is a widespread phenomenon whose severe consequences affect millions of people worldwide. It can therefore be addressed effectively only through international cooperation. This meeting provides an important platform for constructive dialogue and closer cooperation. The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons was a milestone in the fight against trafficking. Since its adoption, we have taken significant steps together. Today's meeting provides an excellent opportunity to look into the results that we have achieved thus far and at the challenges that still lie ahead. This is an ongoing process, and the work must be continued at global, regional and national levels.

The importance of protecting the victims of trafficking cannot be emphasized enough. Trafficking in human beings is a crime that violates the dignity and integrity of the individual in the deepest possible sense and causes enormous human suffering. It leaves permanent marks unless victims receive the assistance and protection they need in a timely and sustained manner. In the worst cases, legal systems punish the victims of human trafficking and let the real perpetrators — the traffickers — go free. In that regard, every country and Government can do better, including Finland.

The Government of Finland is currently reviewing its national system for victim protection and assistance. An intergovernmental working group has been reviewing legislation and is expected to make recommendations on how legislation should be improved. Non-governmental organizations, which form an essential part of the group, have long-term experience in working with victims of trafficking at the grass-roots level, as well as valuable expertise. The Government of Finland has also been reviewing its legislation with regard to criminal regulations on trafficking and closely related crimes, as well as on national coordination and intergovernmental follow-up. However, trafficking cannot be addressed effectively without also addressing its root causes. Trafficking can be reduced if poverty is addressed and the general human rights situation is improved.

Improving the situation of women and girls is a good starting point, since they often belong to the most vulnerable groups of society and may suffer from multiple kinds of discrimination. Finland has set the prevention of trafficking as one of the objectives of its second national action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). A specific goal of the action plan is to develop the implementation of an assistance system in a way that helps women and girls who have become victims of trafficking and who are in danger of victimization or re-victimization.

Trafficking in human beings is often part of international organized crime. Authorities in source, transit and destination countries need to work together in order to break trafficking channels and effectively bring perpetrators to justice. Finland has established bilateral cooperation tracks with other countries, which we have found to be extremely valuable. Cooperation with non-governmental organizations is equally important.

Finland aligns itself with the statement to be made later by the observer of the European Union.

Close cooperation among all stakeholders is needed on an issue as multifaceted as trafficking. Finland looks forward to a successful meeting that reinforces our commitment to end trafficking in human beings.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Johanna Mikl-Leitner, Federal Minister for the Interior of Austria.

Ms. Mikl-Leitner (Austria): It is my great pleasure to address the General Assembly. As we all know, trafficking in persons is a serious crime and a gross violation of human rights. Often even young girls and boys are lured to other countries by false promises of a better future, where they end up being physically and sexually exploited. Although victims may seem to be "free", in many cases they are nevertheless under heavy psychological pressure. In addition, rape and beatings are commonly used in order to make victims more submissive and keep them under control. However, human trafficking not only involves sexual exploitation, it also includes other forms of criminal activities, such as forced labour or the illegal removal of human organs.

Unfortunately, like many other countries, Austria is both a transit and target country for human trafficking. In 2012, more than 24,000 people were detected on Austrian territory while staying in Austria illegally — an increase of 15 per cent as compared to 2011. Sadly, there were about 4,000 juveniles under the age of 18 among those victims of human trafficking. Given that the victims of human trafficking identified in Austria come primarily from Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova and Nigeria, the

Assembly will appreciate that human trafficking is a problem within the European Union as well as at the international level.

Austria's message is clear: we must not look away from any kind of abuse. We need to take joint action to support and protect victims from exploitation, and we need to compensate them for their suffering.

In many cases, police officers play a crucial role in identifying and freeing victims who are trapped in the vicious cycle of trafficking. They are often the first ones on site and stand face-to-face with victims. The Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior, which is the equivalent of the United States Department of Homeland Security, is well aware of the essential role that police officers play in combating human trafficking. That is why one of our main goals is to simultaneously provide further training and enhance knowledge and understanding of this fundamental crime.

A further priority in Austria's fight against trafficking in human beings is the establishment of multilateral cooperation. Austria is therefore party to all international legal instruments to combat human trafficking, in particular the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. With 154 States parties — near-universal ratification — the Protocol remains the cornerstone of all global action against human trafficking. Adopted by consensus by the General Assembly in 2010, the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons has served as a useful instrument in many ways. On the one hand, it has kept the issue of trafficking high on the international agenda; on the other, it has encouraged the further ratification and effective implementation of the Protocol. Looking at the increasing numbers of Protocol ratifications and requests for technical assistance in implementing it, we can see that the Global Plan of Action has certainly fulfilled its objective.

However, there are two other concrete and useful outcomes of the Global Plan of Action. I refer first to the establishment of the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which is managed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). I would also like to highlight the mandate given to UNODC to prepare the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, which provides us with some important insights and statistics. Moreover, the Global Plan of Action provides added value by recognizing the central role of civil society and by including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the private sector and the media. The Plan urges Member States, the United Nations and other international, regional and subregional organizations, as well as civil society, to fully implement the relevant provisions of the Plan and the activities it outlines.

I would also like to point out that NGOs are vital partners, especially in the context of the protection of victims and the prevention of human trafficking. We must not forget that, without the active participation of NGOs, no Government would be able to meet the commitments related to fighting, and eventually ending, the crime of trafficking in persons. I therefore especially welcome the important contribution of NGOs to today's high-level meeting.

The political will that is shown at this meeting today will have to be translated into concrete action, and the central role of UNODC cannot be emphasized enough. As we know, UNODC does not only lead the global fight against trafficking and improve the coordination of multilateral efforts through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, it also provides technical assistance on the ratification and implementation of the Convention and its Protocol. In reiterating its commitment to eliminating the crime of trafficking in persons, I would like to point out that Austria will continue to support all international action in that regard, especially the activities of UNODC.

I would like to conclude by wishing all participants a very productive meeting and by reiterating our commitment and common goal of combating human trafficking. Give the victims their lives back.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Osman Mohammed Saleh, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Eritrea.

Mr. Saleh (Eritrea): It is with a sense of pride and honour that I address this important and timely high-level meeting on human trafficking on behalf of a people who, for more than two generations, have been on the front line of the struggle for dignity and human rights, for themselves and other peoples. On a personal level, it is a privilege and honour for me, as it is for many other Eritreans, to have participated in that just struggle, without remuneration, for two thirds of my life.

The Eritrean people, who have suffered the denial of the right to self-determination, two wars of aggression, the occupation of sovereign territory and illegal sanctions, are now facing an additional assault on their human rights and their struggle for redress and justice — organized human trafficking. That barbaric crime is the latest tool in the ongoing attempt to drain Eritrea of its human resources, destroy its economy, impoverish its people and foment a crisis with the aim of violent regime change. Even as Eritrea and its citizens — particularly young people and women, who are the ones being targeted — suffer from that hideous crime, and as our formal request for an independent investigation goes unheeded, the perpetrators have the effrontery to accuse Eritrea of human trafficking. It is the classic case of a thief crying "Thief!" to hide his transgression. Again, where are justice and human rights?

Eritrea is strongly committed to fighting human trafficking nationally, regionally and globally. It has undertaken concrete measures to prevent that crime from happening and to mitigate its impact on victims. Those measures include the following.

First, we are enhancing awareness. Cognizant that public awareness about the crime of human trafficking and its many and ever-changing manifestations is the first, important step towards its eradication, Eritrea has undertaken a comprehensive campaign, strongly featuring trafficking victims and their families and communities.

Secondly, we are prosecuting criminals. That is an important tool in Eritrea's strategy of fighting crimes of human smuggling and trafficking. Law enforcement agencies and local communities are actively working in identifying and apprehending the perpetrators of those crimes and bringing them to justice.

Thirdly, we are providing support to victims. Eritrea opposes any stigmatization of the victims of human trafficking and provides them with all possible assistance. Eritrean diplomatic missions and communities in the countries of destination provide them with consular services and other assistance they may require. The Government encourages them to visit their country or to return permanently, and thousands of them have done so.

Fourthly, we are promoting regional and international cooperation. It is the responsibility of States to enact and implement anti-human-trafficking laws and ensure that no such crime goes unpunished. Yet, no State can win the fight alone. Collaboration between countries of origin, transit and destination is also vital in order to combat this crime. In that regard, Eritrea is closely coordinating its actions with Egypt, the Sudan and other countries.

Fifthly, we are calling for an impartial investigation. As I indicated earlier, in Eritrea's case, the crime of human trafficking has become enmeshed with an externally driven political agenda aimed at destabilizing the country. It is not only a criminal network of human traffickers that Eritrea is contending with, but, more insidiously, those who are using the traffickers as tools and those who are creating an enabling environment for the crime through generous funding, vicious propaganda, the provision of safe havens and active destabilization. Eritrea has solid evidence that individuals and groups posing as human rights defenders, representatives of at least one United Nations agency and officials of some Governments are implicated. That is why Eritrea has officially called on the United Nations to launch an independent and transparent investigation into that abominable affair, so as to bring justice to Eritrean victims and to a country that is the target of a malicious, concerted and unlawful campaign. Such an investigation will also serve to expose and bring to account not only the criminals who ply their murderous trade for money, but also those ultimately responsible, who cynically abet the crime in pursuit of an illegal and violent political agenda.

The fight against human trafficking is ultimately linked to the struggle for peace, stability and socioeconomic development within countries and a fairer and more equal situation globally. Even as we pursue a comprehensive approach, we are all aware that human trafficking must be combated in the here and now. Moreover, there is a need to take concrete action in the form of specific investigations into gross cases of human trafficking and the violation of human rights, with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice.

For their part, the people and government of Eritrea will steadfastly continue to build their nation and at the same time expose and fight human traffickers and their sponsors.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bandar Mohammed Al-Aiban, Minister and President of the Human Rights Commission of Saudi Arabia.

Mr. Al Aiban (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me, first, to convey to the General Assembly the appreciation of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King of Saudi Arabia and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, for convening today's meeting to evaluate the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. While we must commend what has been achieved during the past few years to protect human dignity from exploitation, the seriousness of human trafficking requires us to make every effort to combat it and provide sufficient resources to implement the Global Plan.

Today's meeting, whose purpose is to evaluate the achievements made and identify the gaps and challenges that remain with respect to trafficking in persons, will make us more determined than ever to achieve more to prevent that heinous crime from occurring, assist victims and protect them from future exploitation.

Trafficking in persons is against the commandments of the Islamic sharia, basic principles of human rights and the dignity of human beings. The Government of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques is building our country's national capacity to combat the crime by prevention, protection, care and punishment. A law adopted to combat trafficking in persons represents the legal framework for dealing with those crimes through the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators, of whom there have been many convictions. A national commission has been established to combat human trafficking, provide refuge, protection, medical and psychological care, and legal assistance to victims, to prevent recidivism and to set up policies to actively find and identify victims. The Commission also coordinates efforts among Government agencies and civil society in the fight against trafficking in persons.

The Kingdom has also issued, and will issue many more, regulations related to the exploitation of workers, on child protection and against corruption. A new regulation has been issued for the purpose of monitoring domestic labour and companies that specialize in importing labour that engage in various negative practices associated with trafficking.

The Kingdom has signed many international agreements related to the issue before us, including the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. The Kingdom is intent on aligning its regulations with international standards. Believing that cooperation among States, whether they are source countries or transit countries through which human trafficking is occurring, is paramount, Saudi Arabia is actively participating in establishing regional strategies and agreements to combat the crime.

My country participated in establishing the Arab Strategy to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Unified Law of the Gulf States on the same topic. The Kingdom has always sought the assistance of the United Nations specialized agencies and cooperates with them in that regard. It also participates in all international and regional conferences and meetings and seeks to sign bilateral and multilateral agreements with the countries for the same purpose.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia emphasizes the need to implement the Global Plan of Action and all legal documents related to the crime of human trafficking. It also emphasizes the importance of harmonizing the legal terminology and tackling the social, economic, cultural and political issues that are at the root of the crime. The Kingdom is working to enhance the ability of officials responsible for enforcing the law, ensures the proper treatment of victims, strives to punish perpetrators by all possible means and seeks to enhance international cooperation with a view to achieving those ends.

In conclusion, I would like to assure the General Assembly that the Government of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is determined to prevent, suppress and punish crimes relating to human trafficking and seeks to support and coordinate all efforts to fight that crime.

Finally, I am pleased to declare in this Hall that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has pledged $100,000 to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Paulo Abrão Pires Junior, National Secretary of Justice of Brazil.

Mr. Pires Junior (Brazil) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Federative Republic of Brazil welcomes this opportunity to engage in an appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We believe that a periodic review of the progress made is essential if we are to improve and better coordinate our efforts in that regard.

We appreciate the ongoing efforts of all Member States, as well as those of the Secretary-General, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other relevant bodies of the Organization on the issue of human trafficking.

In our view, the adoption of the Plan of Action constituted an important step forward in the fight against the heinous crime of trafficking in persons. Especially important is the fact that the Plan complements the framework established in the Palermo Convention and its Trafficking in Persons Protocol. We must not only address the issue from the law-enforcement perspective, but also take into account the human rights and socioeconomic dimensions.

The multifaceted nature of the problem requires a comprehensive approach that also tackles the underlying causes of the phenomenon, which are rooted in cultural, economic and political factors. Furthermore, immigration policies and the lack of adequate capability to effectively deal with this problem can compound the effects of human trafficking.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its three Protocols emphasize the need to combat crime. Brazil believes that, in order to effectively deal with the issue of trafficking in persons, public policies should focus not only on enforcement actions but also on prevention, as well as on the provision of assistance to the victims. Moreover, an adequate and effective strategy to deal with trafficking in persons must ensure that fundamental rights are respected. Brazil is committed to increasing the protection that is offered to undocumented foreigners and other vulnerable groups, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, that are victims of human trafficking.

We would also like to stress the need to pay special attention to gender inequality and to all forms of discrimination against women, which are important causes of trafficking in persons, in countries of both origin and destination. Moreover, sexism and gender discrimination are particularly cruel to women survivors of trafficking, who are often social pariahs after surviving their plight, unable to reintegrate and sometimes forced back into the trafficking rings.

Brazil's policy to tackle trafficking in persons is formulated and implemented by a wide range of actors, including governmental agencies as well as non-governmental actors. Brazil's governance model also allows for the large-scale participation of civil society. This is a cross-cutting issue, and the resolution to problems should involve efforts made by society as whole.

Trafficking in persons, due to its characteristics, requires a coordinated strategy. That is true at the national level as well as in the international arena. In the United Nations system, the issue is considered in New York, Geneva and Vienna, albeit from different perspectives. We must strive to ensure coherence in those efforts in order to maintain the synergies among development, the protection of human rights and law enforcement in the fight against trafficking in persons.

Bearing in mind that trafficking knows no borders, we must also strengthen bilateral cooperation, where appropriate. Regional or subregional initiatives must also be effective. The Meeting of Ministers and High Authorities on Women of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) has commissioned a regional diagnosis on the issue of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation in the context of MERCOSUR and is about to issue a guide on assistance to women in situations of trafficking for sexual exploitation, as an initial step towards streamlining assistance procedures in the region.

My delegation will continue to support all of the efforts of the United Nations to ensure an effective response to human trafficking. International cooperation, including enhancing the United Nations Global Plan of Action, must be based on shared responsibility and better coordination among countries of destination, transit and origin, with a view to the protection of the victims and the prosecution of human traffickers and those who benefit from these crimes.

We believe that the consolidation of a global network to protect and assist victims would discourage demand and prevent re-victimization. Furthermore, in our view, our common responsibility towards fighting human trafficking should not affect those who legitimately seek better living standards in other countries. The most recent example of our commitment to multilateral cooperation was the launching, in Brazil, of the Brazilian version of the Blue Heart campaign, which was honoured by the presence of the Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Mr. Yury Fedotov. The campaign is based on the slogan "Freedom can not be bought, dignity cannot be sold", and it is aimed at encouraging public participation in efforts to combat trafficking in persons.

We will continue to play our part, cooperating with all Member States and the United Nations system as a whole in order to attain those objectives.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Marisa Helena Morais, Minister of the Internal Administration of Cape Verde.

Ms. Morais (Cape Verde): It is a great pleasure for me to be here at this very important meeting on our common fight against human trafficking. We all are engaged in working against this intolerable crime, which affects all countries of the world and has numerous victims in our societies that need protection and assistance.

I would not wish to repeat all of the excellent statements that we have heard since the beginning of this high-level meeting, so let me just say a few words about our policy in Cape Verde and highlight some important aspects of today's theme.

Cape Verde is an archipelago consisting of 10 islands located in the North Atlantic, off the West Coast of Africa. At the crossroads of three continents – Europe, Africa and America – and with a large exclusive economic zone, Cape Verde has a privileged geographic strategic position. This geostrategic position, while a factor of development, also poses a risk. With this particular location, right in the middle of Atlantic trafficking routes and given the extent of its coastline, Cape Verde has become vulnerable to criminal activities, particularly the illicit trafficking in drugs and trafficking in persons. We have not identified human trafficking networks in Cape Verde, but dozens of women from West Africa have been identified on the tourism islands of Sal and Boa Vista in the practice of prostitution, which may indicate the existence of such organized trafficking.

Aware of the risks, the Cape Verdean Government has outlined a strategy to combat organized crime, including elements for strong international cooperation. We strongly believe that regional and international cooperation is the key to the effectiveness of that fight. Cape Verde has ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. We are now seeking to implement the Protocol our in national legislation, with the aim of addressing the existing shortcomings. We are engaged in an ongoing review of the legal, institutional and procedural aspects of this issue, which was preceded by an evaluation process in which the authorities determined together the advantages and shortcomings of the current system and defined the structures needed. Criminalizing trafficking in human beings is a priority. To ensure the more effective prosecution of human trafficking networks, the protection of victims of trafficking in human beings is also a concern. We are also aware of the need to sensitize and inform our people, while involving civil society, in order to achieve results that protect victims, prevent the existence of human trafficking and punish those responsible for those crimes against human rights.

Despite all the difficulties and constraints it faces, Cape Verde is dedicated to implementing the goals of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We appeal to all Member States to contribute substantially to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Valentin Rybakov, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): In his renowned *Social Contract,* the great thinker Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains". Unfortunately, that dictum, uttered more than two and a half centuries ago, is still valid today. Tens of millions of people find themselves trapped in the chains of contemporary slavery, namely, human trafficking. Some sources even argue that the number of slaves is higher today than it was in the past, when slavery was official and thrived.

The situation, however, is not hopeless. In fact, the current generation has been moving towards what I would call its own implicit social contract, aimed at combating this scourge. Our social contract takes the form of a set of international legal instruments, practices and alliances. It is essentially what the international community often refers to as the global partnership against slavery and human trafficking. We have been forging that contract in an incremental way, as we increasingly realize the scale of the threat posed by human trafficking.

The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, which supplements the Convention, adopted in 2000, marked the turning point in our

efforts against that crime. Those documents, it is widely agreed, imbued our work with an explicit law-enforcement approach.

Let us be frank. Perhaps that kind of approach was both necessary and justified at the turn of the millennium, against the horrible backdrop of growing international terrorism. What is crucial, however, is that we not cut short our social contract aimed at combating human trafficking. The quest for both new ideas and new forms of action continues.

The Global Forum to Fight Human Trafficking, which was held in Vienna in 2008 and was the largest contemporary gathering on that topic, unequivocally gave new impetus to our efforts. As a result, what emerged on the agenda was the idea of a comprehensive global document on human trafficking. That idea was destined to be realized in the form of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

I am proud that Belarus was there at the start of that landmark initiative. Large-scale efforts to eradicate human trafficking at the international level was one of the main areas of Government policy for Belarus under the direct supervision of our President. By 2005, under the leadership of our Head of State, we had adopted and implemented international decisions and documents that comprehensively improved the situation, as recognized by the relevant international organizations. Consequently, Belarus decided to share its vision and its solutions with its partners at the international level.

At the 2005 World Summit, President Lukashenka put forward the idea of an initiative to improve international coordination in combating one of the most acute problems of contemporary times, namely, human trafficking. The idea of a global plan of action gradually arose in the course of implementing that initiative, becoming a reality in 2010. There is no doubt that the efforts of just one State in bringing about the Global Plan of Action would not have been sufficient. That initiative was possible because an alliance of States committed to it, namely, the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking.

What are the advantages of the Global Plan? I would like to highlight just four of them.

First, it is true that the Plan is the first truly global document in the area of combating human trafficking, as all previous international instruments were drawn up by either specialized or regional institutions. It is hardly surprising, then, that those documents had a specialized or regional focus.

Secondly, the Global Plan ensured a comprehensive approach to the challenge of human trafficking. The document duly reflects the three main components of combating human trafficking — prevention, prosecution and protection. Furthermore, by establishing the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the Global Plan underscores the relevance of the protection aspect. Most likely, that came about because that element was never at the forefront of previous instruments on human trafficking. I would like to take this opportunity to announce that Belarus has made its second contribution to the Trust Fund, in the amount of $50,000. We hope that other countries will follow our example.

Thirdly, the Global Plan is an important document for coordinating international efforts in combatting human trafficking. Various stakeholders are active in this area today, including States, international organizations, inter-agency mechanisms, civil society and the private sector. At the same time, previous international documents on human trafficking mainly focused on harmonizing certain aspects of national legislation. They did not concern themselves with the issue of coordination. The Global Plan has addressed that shortcoming by defining areas for stakeholders' activities and mechanisms for coordinating their efforts. In that respect, I would like to emphasize the importance that the Global Plan attaches to international coordination through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

Fourthly, the Global Plan has significantly raised global awareness and enhanced understanding of human trafficking. In particular, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime has begun publishing biennial global reports on the topic and created a relevant database.

Nonetheless, the Global Plan has certainly not meant an end to work on our implicit social contract against human trafficking. As before, we must keep gradually moving forward, recognizing and grappling with new aspects of this challenge and then solving them effectively. History teaches us that "wars" on such phenomena — whether human trafficking, drug trafficking or terrorism — cannot be completely victorious. Our task, therefore, is to reduce such threats to a minimum, so that society, by and large, does not

notice or perceive them. In turn, that understanding demands that all stakeholders steadfast attention to the challenges and generate new ideas and initiatives for dealing with them.

As far as trafficking in persons is concerned, as a next step in the war on this particular phenomenon, Belarus believes it is crucial that we deal seriously with the issue of trafficking for the purposes of removing people's organs, tissues and cells. Available information clearly indicates that the problem is growing. In that connection, we would like to propose a two-pronged approach. First, the international organizations concerned must substantially step up their investigations of the problem. Secondly, Member States must begin a dialogue on the possibility of drafting an international legal instrument specific to the issue. Of course, we must also bring all the other stakeholders into the discussion.

I began my statement by drawing a historical parallel; I would I like to conclude it with another. Two centuries ago, the battle to end slavery was successful primarily thanks to great British abolitionists such as William Wilberforce, Granville Sharp and Thomas Clarkson. Those people threw themselves almost singlehandedly against the wall of slavery and brought it down. The contemporary abolitionist movement includes millions. It is armed with highly varied and specialized international tools. Moreover, it faces not a wall but a handful of admittedly very sophisticated criminals. The problem for the fight against human trafficking, therefore, is not a lack of potential. Rather, it is a question of our desire to exploit the potential we have to the full. Let us give it serious thought and do all we can to ensure that we achieve that potential.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Hisham Badr, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs for International Organizations of Egypt.

Mr. Badr (Egypt): Twenty years after the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, it was the right time to consolidate international efforts in this area through concerted action. The General Assembly's adoption in 2010 of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons therefore represents a crucial milestone in our collective mission to fight this crime. Likewise, our decision to hold this high-level meeting demonstrates our belief in how urgent it is that we implement the Global Plan. It also puts the status of this cause — that of ending human trafficking — on a par with other emerging issues of global concern that require coordinated action and political commitment at the highest level.

In order to combat trafficking in persons, we must be aware of its nature, sources and funding. It is not a single form of transnational organized crime. It encompasses aspects of human rights and development, and intersects with migration issues. It is a scourge reminiscent of slavery and one that the international community is committed to abolishing. As such, a single approach cannot provide a sufficient basis for concrete action to combat this crime. Similarly, national efforts in the area cannot succeed in isolation from a broader international context that brings together regional and international action and ensures coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders.

With its long-time commitment to combating trafficking in persons, Egypt has played a leading role in the field, encouraging national, regional and international action to address the cross-cutting nature of this multifaceted crime. As an active member of the Group of Friends against Trafficking in Persons, and through our organic links to various regional and political groupings within the United Nations system, Egypt worked energetically to garner support for the Assembly's adoption in 2010 of the Global Plan of Action, consolidating the role of African countries in that process, as well as of the Non-Aligned Movement — through its chairmanship of the Movement from 2009 to 2012 — and of the Group of 77 and China. We are gathered here today and tomorrow to take stock of its implementation. I take this opportunity to reiterate our satisfaction with the successful adoption of the Plan and its four pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships.

As we embark upon assessing the degree to which we have been able to implement the Global Plan of Action, we must acknowledges the challenges that it presents. It must be underscored that a crucial factor in effective policymaking and implementation of the relevant strategies and programmes is having accurate data and statistics on the forms and extent of the crime. In that regard, Egypt commends the publication by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) of its first *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* since the adoption of the Global Plan of Action. However, the

data collection, statistics and analysis must be based on information provided by States in close coordination with national authorities.

In addition, we must recognize the importance of partnerships for effectively implementing the Global Plan of Action. In that regard, I would like to stress the following points.

First and foremost, success is closely tied to declared political commitment. Egypt therefore urges States that have not yet done so to accede to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.

Secondly, the existing mechanisms being used in the field must be continually evaluated.

Thirdly, combating trafficking in persons requires a comprehensive approach and synchronizing and coordinating action among the relevant United Nations agencies, entities and mechanisms. We must also continually monitor and identify the emerging forms that human trafficking takes. In that regard, Egypt expresses grave concern about, and warns against, the increasing rates of trafficking in children, as mentioned in this year's UNODC report. In that regard, I would like to stress the pivotal role of such bodies as the United Nations Task Force on Transnational Organized Crime and Drug Trafficking, UN-Women, the Human Rights Council, UNICEF and others.

Fourthly, there must be an emphasis on close coordination of action among origin, transit and destination countries.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Last but not least is the involvement of civil-society actors and stakeholders in the fight against trafficking in persons. National, regional and international action in this area requires effective partnerships with them, be they non-governmental organizations working in the field, mass-media outlets or the private sector, as well as others. They have a crucial role to play at the grass-roots level in helping to implement policies, strategies and programmes. Crucial elements in the fight against human trafficking, especially for its prevention and protection aspects, are sensitization and awareness-raising, particularly in countries of origin, on the dangers and hazards that go with involvement in such crimes, as well as addressing their root causes, which include poverty, illiteracy and a lack of health care.

Let me briefly share with the Assembly Egypt's experience in fulfilling its obligations and commitments to combating human trafficking. Those efforts go back as far as our ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. Our national coordinating committee on combating and preventing human trafficking was established in 2007. In 2010, Egypt issued its national law on combating human trafficking. In conjunction, we adopted and successfully implemented our first national plan of action, for the period 2011–2012. We are now in the process of implementing our second plan, which covers the period from January 2013 to December 2015. In adherence to the Global Plan of Action, our efforts hinge on the pillars of prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships.

Partnerships have been successfully established with Egypt's governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, in addition to international partners, notably the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNODC, the United Nations Development Programme, the European Union and academic centres and universities. Other potential partners include UN-women, UNICEF and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Implemented and future programmes focus on the areas of capacity-building, in particular for law-enforcement officials, border-control officers, customs officials, the judiciary and diplomats, as well as on the protection of and provision of services to victims.

In cooperation with UNODC, Egypt has contributed to training workshops in this area, such as that held for Sudanese officials in November 2012. At the regional level, Egypt has always played a key role in promoting the agenda of combating the trafficking in persons in Africa, through the Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, by contributing to relevant strategies in the Arab world, and through the establishment of a specialized unit at the League of Arab States responsible for combating the trafficking in persons. Consultations with the IOM and the African Union are under way to hold, before the end of this year, a regional workshop on human trafficking and migration issues focused on East Africa.

The key to success is the identification of the problem in its various aspects and working on solutions. Egypt is therefore keen to continuously monitor the emerging forms and manifestations of trafficking in persons. The path, however, is fraught with challenges — challenges that require further capacity-building, the collection of accurate data and addressing the root causes of trafficking. Areas of concern and future action include, among others, approaches to diminishing the demand for exploitative services; providing protection mechanisms and services for women and children, because they are the most vulnerable; enhancing law enforcement and the prosecution of trafficking crimes; enhancing systems of victim identification and referral; and providing assistance to victims. However, efforts in that regard cannot bear fruit without international cooperation and partnerships.

In conclusion, let me again highlight the elements essential to ensuring the success of our national and global efforts in combating trafficking in persons, namely, political will and commitment; cooperation at the regional and international levels as well as among origin, transit and destination countries; and partnerships with various stakeholders. All those elements have to come against the backdrop of addressing the root causes of the crime. The primary cause can be addressed through the fulfilment of international commitments towards the achievement of development goals.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Julio Arriola, Vice-Minister for Administrative and Technical Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Paraguay.

Mr. Arriola (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The trafficking in persons is one of the most horrendous and pernicious crimes against human dignity; it is modern slavery, in other words. For that reason, the Republic of Paraguay attaches the utmost importance to its participation at this high-level meeting in order to reaffirm our commitment in the fight against the crime of trafficking in persons. In that regard, we would like to share with the General Assembly a number of initiatives, efforts and programmes that we have implemented to combat the trafficking in persons in all its manifestations.

Paraguay identified this scourge in its 1992 Constitution as well as in its 1998 penal code, which also included the crime of sexual slavery. Subsequent modifications in 2008 broadened the concept to cover all forms of slavery, including trafficking in persons for purposes of personal exploitation, labour or the removal of human organs without consent.

In December 2012, Paraguay's comprehensive law against the trafficking of persons was enacted, the aim of which is to prevent and punish trafficking in persons in all modalities of the crime perpetrated within our national territory, as well as abroad. The law's further aim is to protect and assist victims and to strengthen State actions to combat this punishable act. Our comprehensive law on the trafficking in persons also established an inter-agency bureau for the prevention and combating of trafficking in persons in the Republic of Paraguay. The bureau serves as an advisory body that assists the Government and as a coordinating body for the prevention and suppression of the crime. Moreover, it has also established a national strategy to combat trafficking in persons. Currently, Paraguay is in the process of instituting a public-service ministry, a national programme to prevent and combat trafficking and a national investment fund to provide assistance and care for victims of trafficking.

Good practices have been identified for cooperation and coordination for investigations and joint exercises to be carried out involving existing judiciary mechanisms in the countries of origin, transit and destination, making use of joint investigative protocols. These coordination efforts, which have been spearheaded by the inter-agency bureau in the fight against human trafficking, have made it possible for participating institutions to promote appropriate conditions for the prevention, awareness of and suppression of this crime.

Initiatives have also been launched to establish a special unit in the public-service ministry to tackle trafficking in human beings and child sexual exploitation. Our national police force has also set aside a counter-human trafficking unit and related sex crimes unit. The Ministry for Children and Adolescents has also set up a specialized unit to provide coordination in an awareness campaign on the prevention of victims of trafficking — children, girls and adolescents. Furthermore, as part of our prevention efforts, the inter-agency bureau is in the process of developing a number of workshops to help train prosecutors, magistrates, members of the armed forces, students and teachers at universities and the general public.

All of the efforts that have been made in the field of prevention, particularly the awareness-raising campaigns, are targeting protection for the most vulnerable sectors of the population — women, boys, girls and adolescents. In the context of social responsibility, the State of Paraguay has launched a joint partnership with the business community, which has made it possible to provide victims of trafficking and exploitation new alternatives in employment.

In terms of assistance and care, we have a referral centre operating in Paraguay as well as a safe house that provides assistance for victims and where comprehensive care can be provided. We are in the process of developing a social reintegration programme for women. Also with regard to protection, regional centres have been set up in border cities and in cities that have been identified as areas where victims are often targeted. In the short term, we are planning to inaugurate new referral centres and safe houses in other cities as well. In those centres and safe houses, the recipients of care are often women who have been victims of trafficking or women who have been victims of gender-based violence.

With regard to international cooperation, I wish to emphasize that Paraguay is a country of origin when it comes to trafficking in human beings. Our country has been severely adversely affected by structural poverty, which has an impact on a large share of our population. Those conditions have further exacerbated victims' dependency. As a result, the principle of shared responsibility has been enshrined by the international community in order to combat the various forms of transnational organized crime. Countries of transit and destination, as well donors and international organizations, must redouble their efforts to cooperate further in a solidarity-based fight against human trafficking. In Paraguay's case, that international cooperation recently enabled us to conduct a joint effort with countries of origin and destination involving simultaneous operations aimed at dismantling international networks. Those operations contributed to taking down more than 10 networks and resulted in dozens of women being released.

The United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons represents a significant step forward and an important practical international instrument in global efforts to deal with and eradicate human trafficking. Paraguay is therefore proud to be able to participate in implementing the Plan in the medium and long term. In that regard, we would like to emphasize the leading role that the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund plays in supplying resources for the fight against trafficking in persons, providing assistance to victims of this crime and carrying out awareness-raising and prevention campaigns.

Finally, we wish to emphasize to all Member States the importance we attach to the opportunity given to us to contribute to this high-level meeting of the United Nations on the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, in order for us to share with the international community evidence of the problems and continuing efforts that Paraguay has developed and will continue to work on in order to combat this crime.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Marcela Chacón, Vice-Minister of the Interior of Costa Rica.

Ms. Chacón (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights established basic principles on slavery and trafficking in persons. Combating that crime has been considered essential to the full protection of human rights ever since.

Costa Rica associates itself with the statement to be made later by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Human Security Network.

Our country has committed itself to combating this crime in all its manifestations, in particular through our signing and ratification in 2003 of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. In most cases, human trafficking is conducted through highly organized structures, so that the only way to combat it is by creating strategic networks that work collaboratively, using the same language and the same approach within each entity's purview. For that reason, the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, as well as the Palermo Protocol, are essential multilateral efforts to better coordinate the prevention, prosecution, protection and help for trafficking victims.

The International Labour Organization estimates that the initial "sale" of individuals generates an annual amount between $7 billion and $12 billion, to which must be added another $32 billion produced through exploitation of the victims. This is considered the third most lucrative form of organized crime after arms and

drug trafficking. Those figures do not include the large number of victims of internal, invisible trafficking, which also includes illegal trafficking in human organs, cells and tissue.

As part of its commitment, in 2005 Costa Rica established a national coalition against the illicit trafficking in migrants and human trafficking, tasked with promoting the creation, execution, follow-up and evaluation of national, regional and local public policies aimed at preventing illegal trafficking in persons, aiding victims and prosecuting and punishing those responsible. The coalition has created a complex, coordinated inter-institutional network for dealing comprehensively with this crime in Costa Rica. Based on that, various tools have been developed, among them a protocol for identifying situations where children and adolescents are being trafficked; a comprehensive model for providing assistance to survivors and victims of trafficking; national guidelines for strengthening and coordinating institutions in combating human trafficking; and a strategic plan of action for the period 2012 to 2015.

A bill against trafficking in persons and establishing that coalition was approved last year and enacted in February 2013. The law provides authorities with better tools for action and strengthens the institutions involved. The law establishes meaningful sanctions for sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, sex tourism and trafficking in human organs, tissue and fluids, among other things. In 2009, an emergency response team was set up, designed specifically as an inter-institutional body to assist those affected by human trafficking and to integrate the various Government institutions dealing with this issue. A crucial factor in helping the coalition reach its goals is achieving integration and coordination among governmental, non-governmental and civil-society organizations within the framework of a plan of action. That effort has led to ensuring that all action focuses on the victims of the crime of human trafficking.

With regard to implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action, it is important to point out that one of the most significant achievements at the regional level was the creation, in 2009, of the Regional Coalition against Trafficking in Persons, as the representative of Nicaragua will discuss later, and for which Costa Rica serves as technical secretariat. This body promotes the coordination of the various coalitions, committees and advisory boards aimed at combating trafficking in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, Belize, Guatemala and Honduras, so as to consolidate the implementation and follow-up mechanisms that enable us to have a comprehensive approach to the crime of human trafficking at the regional level, and to have an impact on it through the Regional Conference on Migration. The Regional Coalition has taken on the important role of coordinating and promoting the implementation of the operational programme of the regional action framework for a comprehensive approach to the crime of trafficking in persons in Central America.

Despite those achievements, significant challenges remain in the areas of preventing this crime and punishing perpetrators, as well as in assisting victims and helping them to genuinely reintegrate and begin to build a life of dignity. The geographical location of the Central American region, and of Costa Rica in particular, puts us in the middle of the north-south route for the western hemisphere, which organized criminals make use of to carry out their activities. We must focus on prosecuting and punishing this crime, and Costa Rica is seeking to achieve a balance between the number of victims identified and cases in which sentences are handed down. For that reason, we would once again like to affirm to the Assembly Costa Rica's serious commitment to completely eradicating the crime of human trafficking on our territory. When we see the faces of individuals who have endured human trafficking and the emptiness in their eyes where their souls have fled in an attempt to survive, we must understand that, in our efforts both as States and as national, regional and international organizations, we must do everything we can, and that if we save even one such person all our efforts will have been worthwhile.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Jigmiddash Bayartsetseg, State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice of Mongolia.

Ms. Bayartsetseg (Mongolia): I wish to express my profound appreciation to the United Nations for organizing this high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. We all believe that this auspicious event will provide a unique opportunity to assess the implementation of the Global Plan, share best practices and learn lessons in fighting against the trafficking in persons.

At the outset, I would like to reaffirm my Government's strong commitment and full support for implementation at the national level of the Global Plan of Action and resolution 67/190, on improving the coordination of efforts against the trafficking in persons.

As a country of origin for human trafficking, Mongolia attaches great importance to combating that crime as an interconnected issue of crime prevention and detection and the protection of victims. The protection of affected women and children's rights are placed at the core of countries' national policies.

Let me highlight some the achievements and progress that have been made in Mongolia. Mongolia is undertaking enormous efforts to improve its national policies and to provide for enabling legislation to combat the trafficking in persons, under the framework provided by the Global Plan of Action. We are targeting the three main pillars, namely, prevention, detection and prosecution, as well as supporting the rehabilitation and protection of the victims of such heinous crimes.

Trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation is the most frequent form of trafficking in the case of Mongolia. The Government accordingly pays special attention to it. The Parliament of Mongolia adopted a law to combat human trafficking in January 2011, which is a significant milestone in setting the right policy framework. The key objective of the stand-alone law is to better prevent trafficking and to protect victims with a holistic approach through repatriation, social integration assistance and monetary compensation, as well as to increase the participation of non-governmental organizations and local communities in those efforts. Our Ministry of Justice has spearheaded anti-trafficking efforts and is working on the new programme of action covering the next five years, which was adopted in 2009. At the direction of the Minister, we have established an inter-agency council to effectively implement the programme and ensure coordination in order to improve national-level efforts. That council consists of the State secretaries of several ministries and the relevant representation of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The Government of Mongolia has initiated a comprehensive criminal justice reform effort aimed at introducing and implementing legal and institutional reforms. The central focus of that major initiative is to effectively and efficiently combat newly emerging transnational crimes, including trafficking in persons. As part of that reform initiative, we are currently substantially amending the criminal code and the code of criminal procedure, which incorporates new provisions covering all forms of human trafficking, consistent with international standards and best practices, including those relating to the criminalization of the trafficking in persons and the prosecution of perpetrators. An independent investigative authority will be established within the next year with clear jurisdiction over such crimes. With a view to effectively implementing the relevant provisions of the Global Plan of Action with regard to the protection of, and assistance to, victims of trafficking in persons, Mongolia is working on a legislative initiative to improve the prosecution of crimes directly related to trafficking in persons.

The Government of Mongolia attaches great importance to the prevention of this crime through increased public awareness. It also cooperates closely with non-governmental organizations and effectively coordinates their efforts, including the operation of a nationwide toll-free call system. A victim-protection shelter has been in operation since 2009 and is being run by specialized non-governmental organizations and subsidized by the Government of Mongolia.

The Government has also established a special fund available to victims abroad for repatriation. Moreover, border security management in immigration policies has been markedly improved, and e-passports for Mongolian citizens are to be introduced this year to deter people from smuggling and trafficking in persons. That is an integral part of our efforts at the national level to prevent trafficking in persons. Mongolia will continue its training of human resources in law-enforcement agencies, particularly those directly working on this crime and other emerging new crimes.

For even better implementation of the Global Plan of Action, Mongolia would like to urge other member countries to develop closer cooperation and partnerships at the international, regional and bilateral levels. In particular, we would like to encourage and propose the conclusion of mutual legal assistance agreements concerning criminal matters, including on combating trafficking in persons. That would greatly facilitate our joint efforts for more effective prevention and efficient detection of those crimes, as well as improved protection for victims and witnesses.

Mongolia's strong and unconditional commitment to the Global Plan of Action and our initial efforts

for its implementation have already started showing results, especially with regard to the significant increase in the detection and prosecution of the crime of human trafficking. However, we must do more in order to substantially reduce and eliminate altogether the trafficking in persons, at both the national and global levels. In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the firm commitment of the Mongolian Government to continued and improved cooperation with the relevant United Nations bodies and other international and regional mechanisms to strengthen the partnership to combat trafficking in persons, as envisaged by the Global Plan of Action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdulrahim Alawadi, Assistant Minister for Legal Affairs at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Alawadi (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): There is no doubt that the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons has made it possible to achieve concrete goals in combating human trafficking by strengthening international engagement and cooperation. Success in combating trafficking in persons depends mainly on our success in dealing with other issues — poverty and vulnerability in particular — that lead individuals to become victims of trafficking. We also need to strengthen our capacity and develop policies to empower women and find ways to protect girls and prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking.

The responsibility for combating trafficking in persons should be borne not only by the countries of destination, but also largely by the countries of origin. Countries of origin must endeavour to address the causes that lead to the exploitation of victims and seek to prevent trafficking in persons, particularly women, under the pretext of exporting labour to other countries.

The United Arab Emirates has made considerable progress in its efforts to fight trafficking in persons since the launch of our national campaign to combat human trafficking, in 2006, in accordance with a strategy based on the main pillars of the Global Plan of Action, namely, prevention, persecution, punishment and partnership.

With regard to prevention, the Government issued and enacted a federal law on human trafficking in 2006, which is the first of its kind in the Middle East and which includes provisions covering all forms of human trafficking. A national committee to combat human trafficking has been established to develop a comprehensive strategy to implement human trafficking legislation, to fight that crime, to protect and reintegrate its victims and to ensure respect for their human rights. Last year, that legislation was amended to make it more consistent with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. The measures taken to date have proved their effectiveness, in particular with regard to increasing the number of convictions. Through its membership in the Group of Friends, the United Arab Emirates participates effectively in the efforts of the Group to implement the Global Plan of Action adopted by the General Assembly and in promoting partnerships and international cooperation in that regard.

Pursuant to the call of the General Assembly to mobilize funds for the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking, I take this opportunity to pledge a donation of $50,000 to the Fund.

The United Arab Emirates is eager to cooperate with the authorities concerned, and we have entered into agreements with other countries on migration. We are also studying 29 additional agreements on combating trafficking which are to be signed with other countries. We have joined the Bali Process on People Smuggling, Trafficking in Persons and Related Transnational Crime.

The Government of the United Arab Emirates is fully aware of the multiple challenges and interconnected dimensions associated with the crime of trafficking in persons, all of which require constant diligence. We will continue to improve our performance in combating that phenomenon with our partners and in accordance with the best global practices.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Dipu Moni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh.

Ms. Moni (Bangladesh): I commend the President for convening this high-level meeting on the appraisal of the progress made on the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The meeting is a stark reminder that human trafficking continues to stand out as the fastest-growing organized transnational crime in the world and thrives on enslaving an estimated 2.5 million people. Its victims are of 136 different nationalities, with a growing number of children, especially girls, falling prey to its vicious grip.

Together, we must do everything we can to reverse those numbers.

The Global Plan of Action has been an enormous source of optimism as the first collective and determined global response designed to combat trafficking in persons across our borders. Three years after its adoption, we can take a modicum of pride in the fact that we have achieved some tangible outcomes from the Plan of Action.

First, it has become a seminal reference point, nationally and regionally, for strengthening international cooperation around its four pillars of prevention, prosecution, protection and partnership. Secondly, the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund has taken definitive shape for supporting victims of trafficking. Thirdly, the effective use of the global reports on trafficking in persons is helping Member States update national data and fill in their knowledge gaps about evidence-based facts on the demand-supply nexus and the modus operandi of the global and regional trafficking networks.

As a country of origin, transit and destination, Bangladesh has positioned itself at the forefront of global and regional anti-trafficking initiatives. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's personal commitment to combating the vice has been translated into a string of bold and affirmative actions. Under our Government's watch, Bangladesh has become party to the United Nations Convention on Transnational Organized Crime and remained consistently active within the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking.

At the regional level, Bangladesh has spearheaded an initiative to further broaden the scope of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution, and remains at the forefront of the Regional Cooperation Framework of the Bali Process, which facilitates greater delivery of capacity-building support and global good practices to Member States.

At the bilateral level, we have intensified cooperation with India under a joint committee on rescue, recovery, repatriation and integration. We are seeing to engage further with Myanmar to address the issue of irregular movements and trafficking in persons into and transiting through Bangladesh across our shared land and river borders.

At the national level, our Government has enacted the country's first groundbreaking Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012 and adopted the first National Plan of Action 2012-2014 to implement that comprehensive law. Under our National Plan of Action, regular monitoring and coordination mechanisms have been operationalized at the national, district and subdistrict levels to partnerships between Governmental and non-governmental organizations. A set of procedural rules under the law has also been finalized, with a focus on the rescue, rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking.

Bangladesh has set a global example in best practices and cooperation between the Government and non-governmental organizations in providing victim support, including counseling, legal aid, skills development, rehabilitation and reintegration into society under one-stop safe homes for trafficking victims. Grass-roots motivational committees organize public awareness on the perils of trafficking through sociocultural media campaigns. The prosecution and conviction of offenders are being given particular attention as a prevention strategy.

Trafficking cases with violence are tried under special tribunals for violence against women and children. Trafficking monitoring cells at police headquarters regularly collect and analyse data on trafficking, including intelligence on criminal operations and the rescue and rehabilitation of victims. Anti-trafficking strategies have been made part of the training of law enforcement and immigration personnel. The enactment of anti-money-laundering and mutual legal assistance legislation last year further tightened the criminalization measures against human traffickers.

Human trafficking is nevertheless much more than a law-and-order issue. We can hardly win our battle against it without a holistic approach to addressing its underlying social, economic, cultural and demographic factors. While it remains a race against time, we must sustain meaningful and effective partnerships under the Global Plan of Action. There needs to be greater interface and complementarity between the Global Plan and the ongoing regional anti-trafficking initiatives. We also urge the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to enhance access to the small grants facility for non-governmental organizations with demonstrable expertise in providing assistance to victims, especially in developing countries.

The Global Plan of Action must be all about action and results. This high-level meeting must chart the future road map for our individual and collective responsibilities to root out this most ignominious of crimes within our lifetime. Bangladesh offers the following pledges towards that end.

We shall continue to develop enabling legislation at the national and regional levels for stringent legal actions against the purveyors of trafficking and to ensure enhanced protection for victims; invest in a seamless intelligence network across the Asia-Pacific region to detect and monitor the changing flows and patterns of trafficking; press for mobilizing sufficient resources through international cooperation and United Nations agencies in order, inter alia, to improve a common data collection management and sharing system, as well as develop an effective information campaign strategy; enhance capacity for prosecution, the early disposal of trafficking cases and enhanced mutual legal assistance among countries of origin, transit and destination; pursue a coherent and consistent policy response to addressing the underlying demand and supply factors of human trafficking in coordination with the countries of origin, transit and destination; further strengthen our robust engagement with civil society, non-governmental organizations, media and businesses to rally behind our common purpose of creating awareness and fighting human trafficking; consider making contributions, even if token, to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund, following further consultations within our Government; and, lastly, work to address the issue of human trafficking within the broader context of population dynamics as part of the ongoing discourse on the post-2015 development agenda.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdullahi Ahmed Yola, Solicitor-General of Nigeria.

Mr. Yola (Nigeria): The Nigerian delegation would like to commend the President of the General Assembly for convening this high-level meeting. We would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his untiring efforts aimed at improving coordination in the fight against trafficking in persons. We welcome the opportunity provided by this high-level meeting to share ideas on that very important topic, and we hope that our deliberations and the conclusions we reach here will help us to take forward the war on human trafficking.

My delegation wishes to underscore the importance of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, put in place by the United Nations to address challenges posed by that global scourge. The impact and grave consequences of human trafficking cannot be overemphasized and call for concerted global action and shared responsibility on the part of all nations.

Nigeria clearly recognizes that human trafficking constitutes an obstacle to the attainment of the fundamental principles of human rights that are enshrined in our Constitution, and undermines human security and social development. Consequently, Nigeria has expressed its strong political commitment to the Trafficking in Persons Protocol and put in place an effective legal and institutional framework for its implementation.

The National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP) was established with a mandate to coordinate a national response in order to prevent all forms of human trafficking. Its mandate uniquely encapsulates the four pillars of the Global Plan of Action: prevention, protection and assistance, prosecution and partnerships. The Agency is established as a multidimensional model involving officials from, inter alia, the police force, immigration services, State security services and the Ministry of Women Affairs in order to engender an all-inclusive strategic approach.

The Government appreciates the invaluable role played by civil society organizations in eradicating the scourge, and works very closely with stakeholders in various sectors involved in anti-trafficking in persons interventions. A key objective of our anti-trafficking response is to ensure the greater understanding and appreciation of critical partners in order to guarantee the sustainability of programmes aimed at addressing the issue. To that extent, a national stakeholders consultative forum was established to foster collaboration and coordination among the Government, civil society organizations, donors and other development partners working on human trafficking issues in Nigeria.

Our anti-trafficking legislation and policy adhere to the principle of the non-criminalization of victims and ensure their adequate protection and assistance, regardless of immigration status. In line with global best practices, Nigeria has developed a national policy on protection and assistance to victims of trafficking, and established a trust fund for the victims of trafficking to

support activities towards their effective rehabilitation and reintegration.

We would like to reiterate the importance of law enforcement and judicial cooperation in developing an appropriate framework for mutual legal assistance. In that regard, Nigeria has made considerable efforts to build strategic partnerships with major transit and destination countries in order to share and gain experience in best practices in tackling the global scourge. Our law-enforcement cooperation with international partners from eight European countries has culminated in the arrest of 66 persons operating various syndicates and the successful conviction of six traffickers in the Netherlands. In addition, other joint enforcement actions with Belgium and Germany have resulted in convictions of persons charged with trafficking in human beings. Nigeria is currently working closely with the law-enforcement authorities of Norway, Finland, France and the United Kingdom to investigate cases of human trafficking, especially trafficking in children. We have also provided technical assistance to countries in the West African subregion upon their request. In addition, Nigeria recently embarked on a series of voluntary repatriations of stranded victims of trafficking within the West African subregion.

We are pleased to report that our efforts to combat trafficking have yielded some success in investigation and prosecution. NAPTIP has obtained over 190 convictions, and approximately 6,000 victims have been rescued, with a substantial number rehabilitated and reintegrated into society. Our federal Government has approved the mainstreaming of the National Gender Policy. We are making progress in the fight against child labour, especially its most egregious forms, with the formal adoption of three International Labour Organization conventions setting a minimum age for the employment of children at sea, in industry and underground. The National Policy on Child Labour and the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Child Labour in Nigeria 2013-2017 has been adopted.

While efforts are being made to tackle the scourge in source countries, it is important that destination counties take the steps necessary to address issues of demand, that is, what makes trafficking attractive to the criminal networks that exploit weaknesses in national immigration policies.

Finally, I wish to convey the gratitude of the Government and the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the European Union and all our development partners for their support and technical assistance, which have contributed in no small measure to equipping and strengthening our national institutions for the fight against human trafficking in Nigeria.

We would like to reaffirm the total commitment of the Nigerian Government to the eradication of the scourge and pledge to continue to work diligently with the international community for the effective implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Lía Limón García, Under-Secretary for Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Mexico.

Ms. Limón García (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the President of the Republic, Mr. Enrique Peña Nieto, the delegation of Mexico welcomes this high-level meeting convened by the General Assembly in order to review progress achieved in implementing the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

The crime of trafficking in persons is considered the slavery of our times and is the world's most profitable and lucrative undertaking after the sale of weapons and drugs. That is why the Mexican State has made a very significant effort to combat it and taken a series of actions to that end.

As indicated in the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* published by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the victims identified come from 136 countries, and the crime is perpetrated in at least 118 countries. It is also alarming to note that almost half of the victims detected around the world are subject to trafficking across borders within their region of origin and that interregional traffic accounts for another 24 per cent.

Trafficking in persons finds fertile ground for growth in areas where there is disenfranchisement, inequality, legal vacuums and cultural conditions that favour trafficking or make it invisible. That is why the Government of Mexico has undertaken a number of significant social development policies addressing abject poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and the lack of opportunity.

The Government of Mexico is promoting a series of reforms that will have a positive impact on eradicating the primary causes of that crime. Many of those reforms were included in the Pact for Mexico agreement, which was reached by the main political forces of our country and has already had tangible results, such as the adoption of the Victims' General Law, which protects victims at all times, including victims of human trafficking, provides full compensation to the victims of crimes or human rights violations, and establishes the concept of restorative justice in Mexican law. In recent months, the Government has implemented an intensive strategy for violence prevention as a priority on the public agenda. The strategy is designed to ensure the full exercise of rights and the restoration of social calm, and to have a positive impact on the fight against such harmful crimes as human trafficking.

With respect to concrete actions to combat human trafficking, Mexico has had a legal framework on the issue in place since 2007. However, it was not until 2012 that a specific general law on the matter was enacted, namely, the Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of the Crime of Trafficking in Persons and the Protection of and Assistance to Victims. The main goal of the Law is a nationwide streamlining of the sanctions for and legal definition of the offence in order to prevent the burden of proof from falling on the victims and to define the duties involved in caring for and providing protection to victims, their relatives and witnesses.

The Law, being of general application, establishes duties and powers for federal and local authorities and a new model for the prevention, prosecution, eradication and punishment of the crime. Relevant measures range from the drafting of new legal guidelines in line with the Trafficking in Persons Protocol, to various forms of sanctions for perpetrators of the crime and their accomplices and a specific model of care for victims of crime. The Law is guided by the principles of maximum protection, gender sensitivity, the prohibition of slavery and discrimination, the interests of the child, due diligence, the prohibition of forced repatriation or expulsion, the right to reparations, guarantees against re-victimization, religious freedom and the presumption of the status of minor.

My country has striven, and continues to strive, to act in line with the actions defined in the four chapters of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons relating to prevention, the protection of and assistance to victims, prosecution and the strengthening of partnerships. In that respect, an example of the Mexican State's commitment to human rights is the aforementioned General Law for Victims, adopted on 9 January 2013. Its reforms entered into force on 3 May. The Law establishes a cutting-edge system in Mexico for the protection for victims of crime. That system is even broader than the one laid out in the General Law on Trafficking. For example, its reparations, protection and compensation measures are more significant and impose fewer burdens on victims' access. It also establishes a series of measures for investigations and judicial work undertaken on behalf of the victim, including assurance that the burden of proof shall not fall on the victim and that victim can always work with the authorities in investigating cases.

The Government is implementing a comprehensive anti-human-trafficking strategy, including actions coordinated among several Government agencies. One area in which they are working is the harmonization of existing regulations on human trafficking at the federal and state levels. To date, of 32 federal entities, 22 have special laws on trafficking, and one is in the process of adopting such a law. Nine have already included the crime of trafficking in their criminal law. The streamlining of legal guidelines, penalties and other fundamental elements will allow for better coordination between Government bodies, which will necessarily promote better results in the prosecution of crimes of human trafficking.

Today we are working on amending this new law in order to promote its successful implementation. In doing so, we will establish measures for the State to provide prevention, protection and medical and psychological assistance to victims of such crimes and their families, and access to full justice and compensation for damages, regardless of nationality, origin or social status. Also included in the proposed amendments is training for civil servants at all levels of Government who have contact with the victims of such crimes in order to provide better care and avoid the re-victimization of persons subjected to trafficking.

A new element to be included is the certification of shelters for victims and surveillance measures to protect victims from harassment by trafficking networks. That certification takes into account the important role currently played by civil society organizations in the operation of such shelters and, through the development

of protocols to guide their actions, seeks to ensure that they are safe places for victims of trafficking.

With the support of civil society organizations, a national plan on approaches, methodologies and guidelines will also be developed in order to harmonize local plans with the national plan on the subject, and the Mexican Trafficking in Persons Vulnerability Index, which was published in 2010 and contains data from up to 2008, will also be updated. The Index includes the main indicators on the issue of trafficking, vulnerable areas and modalities by region.

Furthermore, in 2008, a special district attorney's office was created to investigate and prosecute crimes related to acts of violence committed against women and human trafficking. Today, we are seeking to strengthen that office with a specialized police unit for investigations.

Finally, by adopting the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, Member States are committed to taking concrete measures to prevent and combat human trafficking, protect and assist victims, prosecute crimes and promote partnerships to strengthen coordination and cooperation. Three years after its adoption, the challenges remain enormous. We hope that our assessment of progress at this important event will lead to concrete recommendations on ways to strengthen the efforts of States and the entire international community and more effectively combat this scourge.

As far as we are able, we will ensure that the message we send to society is that the victims of trafficking and their families are not alone, that the Government of Mexico is not indifferent, and that we are convinced that forums such as this, in which international success stories are shared, help to build public policies that inhibit this new form of slavery and punish those responsible for this crime. The Government of Mexico reiterates its commitment to the fight against human trafficking and to the shared search such new measures and public policies.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mr. Luis CdeBaca, Ambassador-at-Large of the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons of the United States Department of State.

Mr. CdeBaca (United States of America): I am pleased to join so many partners and stakeholders today to discuss progress and the path forward in our shared commitment to combating modern slavery, which we also call trafficking in persons. We are here today because modern slavery is a crime that hurts our countries and communities. It rips families apart, undermines the rule of law, creates instability and tears at the fabric of society.

With few exceptions, the international community speaks with one voice when we say that there is no place for slavery in the twenty-first century. That commitment is enshrined in our cornerstone treaty, the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and it has been carried forward by the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The goal of both the Convention and the Action Plan is clear. It is abolition.

The United States will continue to respond to this call to action by working to prevent this crime and to prosecute traffickers and protect their victims. In September, President Obama announced that we would adopt a comprehensive strategic action plan for helping survivors to get the support and services that they need. My partners at the United States Departments of Justice, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services will lead the way on that five-year plan, working with relevant agencies across the Government. The plan will go into effect this fall and is in the public comment period right now.

We have set out four goals for ourselves: first, better coordination and collaboration at the national, state, tribal and local levels; secondly, to make more people aware of this problem, from Government and community leaders to the public at large; thirdly, to ramp up victim identification efforts and make it easier for survivors to access services; and, finally, to improve the quality of services for all victims. What does that mean? It means making sure that the support we are providing is culturally appropriate and takes into account the trauma that a victim has experienced. It means tailoring solutions to address the short- and long-term health, safety and well-being of the survivors. It means making the services available to all, regardless of the victim's nationality, race, gender, age, religion, disability or sex.

The plan is the first of its kind in the United States. It is going to improve the way in which our Government deals with this crime, and it is going to help more victims of trafficking move forward with the lives they choose for themselves. The victims services plan is going

to enable us to serve all trafficking victims, because trafficking in the United States looks like trafficking everywhere in the world — it is women trapped in domestic servitude and men trapped on farms or on construction sites; it is women and girls and men and boys suffering at the hands of abusive pimps; it is the victims wondering if authorities are going to help them or make things worse.

But it is also communities coming together to help survivors. It is high school and college students raising awareness through modern abolitionist clubs. It is action at the local level, with all 50 states now having passed modern anti-trafficking statutes. And it is the consumers and businesses coming together to look at supply chains, to ensure that the shrimp, the fish, the cocoa, the palm oil, the cotton — all these things upon which we depend — are not tainted by exploitation and abuse.

The solution in the face of this scourge is clear — joint action across nations and across United Nations agencies, working together to deny the traffickers any safe space, rejecting servitude in all of its forms, confronting it not just through development and victim services, but also through effective law enforcement so that trafficking victims can see their abusers brought to justice, because, as Abraham Lincoln so famously once wrote, "those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves and, under a just God, cannot long retain it".

The United States is committed to our shared goal of prevention, protection and prosecution. We will work with our partners in the United Nations and around the world towards our common goal of a world without slavery.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr. Bamba (Côte d'Ivoire): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States. It gives me great pleasure to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on trafficking in women and girls and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime for its global reports on trafficking in persons.

The high-level meeting on the appraisal of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons gives us an opportunity to assess achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the Global Plan of Action and other relevant legal instruments. The African Group condemns trafficking in persons, which constitutes a serious threat to human dignity, human rights and development. The Group recalls the commitment made by world leaders at the Millennium Summit, the 2005 World Summit and the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals to devise, enforce and strengthen effective measures to combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in persons, to counter the demand for trafficked victims, and to protect victims.

Trafficking in human beings is increasingly becoming a global scourge affecting all countries and regions around the world. We in Africa are concerned in particular about the increasing activities of transnational criminal organizations and others that profit from international trafficking in persons, without regard to the dangerous and inhumane conditions those people are exposed to and in flagrant violation of national laws and international standards.

The Group is also concerned about the increased vulnerability of women and girls, who constitute the majority of trafficking victims. In that regard, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union demonstrated its commitment to fighting this scourge through the adoption of the 2006 Joint African Union-European Union Ouagadougou Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings, Especially Women and Children, and also initiated a decision to negotiate the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, which was adopted by the General Assembly in July 2010.

Human trafficking is a gross violation of human rights. It is the trade in human beings through recruitment or abduction by way of force, fraud, debt bondage or coercion for the purposes of forced labour or sexual exploitation. The African Group recognizes that situations of increased poverty, unemployment, inequality, humanitarian emergencies, sexual violence, gender discrimination, social exclusion, marginalization, racism and other factors make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons and contribute to exploitative conditions.

There is an urgent need, therefore, to address the social, economic, cultural, political and other factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking in persons, and to adopt and implement comprehensive policies and programmes at the national level and, as appropriate, at the subregional and regional levels to prevent all forms

of trafficking in persons that are in line with relevant policies and programmes on migration, education, employment, gender equality, the empowerment of women, natural disasters, post-conflict reconstruction and crime prevention.

Efforts to curb the supply side of trafficking by addressing these underlying factors that make people vulnerable to trafficking must be complemented by increased efforts to curb demand for human trafficking. Such a comprehensive approach will bring us one step closer to eliminating the scourge of human trafficking. Our commitment to ending this heinous crime of trafficking in persons, especially women and children, shall be part of the concrete action undertaken to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, protect and assist victims of trafficking, prosecute such crimes and promote partnerships to strengthen coordination and cooperation.

Member States, the international community and its members, as well as civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), should cooperate in strengthening national programmes and in engaging in bilateral, subregional, regional and international collaboration in order to coordinate efforts in the fight against trafficking. We should also encourage the forging of regional initiatives and plans of action aimed at addressing the problem of human trafficking by enhancing information-sharing, technical capacities and mutual legal assistance, as well as by combating corruption and laundering gains derived from trafficking.

The Group also believes that it is crucial to empower victims and build their self-esteem. Adequate technical expertise and financial resources should be directed towards combating human trafficking and supporting victims through job creation and fair labour practices, while promoting policies relating to migration and laws promoting equity and equality for all. The Group also calls for the creation of effective partnerships and the sharing of best practices and lessons learned so as to help prevent crimes and to protect and assist victims of trafficking in seeking justice for the wrongs they have suffered.

The African Group attaches great importance to promoting a human rights-based approach to combating trafficking in persons. It recognizes that victims are generally disadvantaged and marginalized by lack of information, awareness and recognition of their human rights, and by the stigma often associated with trafficking. They also face obstacles in getting access to information and mechanisms for recourse, and therefore in cases where their rights are violated special measures should be applied to protect them and raise their awareness. Their voices are crucial to the process of forming appropriate policies and organizing law enforcement and advocacy efforts in this area. The Group believes it is important to partner with victims, because decisions that are made without their cooperation are less likely to succeed and may even leave them vulnerable to further abuse, distrust, isolation and fear of seeking justice and assistance.

The African Group welcomed the decision in 2010 of Member States to adopt the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, aimed at intensifying efforts to eliminate the practice. Although much remains to be done, the Group is pleased to note that some progress has been made at the global and regional levels, including in Africa, towards criminalizing trafficking in persons. This can be seen in the increasing number of countries that have either adopted or amended existing anti-trafficking legislation and anti-trafficking action plans, policies and programmes aimed at enhancing coordination between the national sector and stakeholders.

The significant transnational and cross-border nature of trafficking, particularly where it concerns women and girls, makes bilateral, regional and international cooperation critical to efforts to combat and eliminate this scourge. Numerous States have therefore stepped up their efforts to expand and strengthen such cooperation, including through participation in multilateral cooperation agreements to combat human trafficking, such as the joint plan of action between the Economic Community of West African States and the Economic Community of Central African States to combat trafficking in persons, particularly women and children. Many other countries in the region cooperate to update laws on trafficking or to implement action plans and conclude bilateral cooperation agreements and partnerships, often with a view to improving law-enforcement and prosecution efforts.

The Group sees the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons as a step forward that encourages ideas not only about the problems associated with the issue but also on successes in elimination, potential training and synergies in awareness-raising that could be expanded in partnership with the United Nations

and other key components, including the engagement of women and girls, Government officials as policymakers, law-enforcement personnel, communities, civil society and NGOs. We are hopeful that this will boost implementation of this legal instrument.

I would like to conclude by stating that the African Group reaffirms its commitment to combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The Group is also convinced that successful implementation of the Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the other relevant legal instruments aimed at eliminating this practice rests to a great extent on States that must ensure that their national actions plans and strategies for eliminating human trafficking are comprehensive and multidisciplinary in scope, incorporating clear targets and indicators for the effective monitoring, assessment and coordination of programmes among all stakeholders. In that regard, and in order to address the multiple challenges involved in combating trafficking in persons, the Group calls for strong and sustainable international cooperation through support for investment in information and research on trafficking, capacity-building and development, and for the system of monitoring and evaluating changes in human-trafficking situations in countries dealing with the greatest difficulties.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

We welcome this high-level meeting, which provides an opportunity to look at the achievements, gaps and challenges in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and other relevant legal instruments. We hope that this meeting will also raise awareness and foster cooperation between the various actors, and be a forum to exchange experiences and best practices.

Addressing trafficking in persons is very high on the agenda of the European Union. Trafficking in persons is the slavery of our times. It is a gross violation of human rights and an extremely complex and ever-changing form of organized crime. In that regard, we reiterate the crucial importance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which for the first time provided an internationally agreed definition of the crime of human trafficking, aimed at preventing trafficking in persons, protecting its victims and prosecuting its perpetrators. We invite all States to ratify the Global Plan of Action without delay in order to ensure its effective, coordinated and coherent implementation, one of its main objectives.

The International Labour Organization estimates the number of victims of forced labour at 20.9 million around the world, while 880,000 are believed to be in forced labour within the European Union. Different reports show clear trends and perspectives, but specific data is not always comparable. But from what we know, this is only the tip of the iceberg. The first ever EU report on trafficking in human beings was released in April, revealing worrying trends, such as the fact that 23,632 people were identified as or presumed to be victims of trafficking in the EU over the period between 2008 and 2010. Almost seven out of 10 trafficking victims in Europe are women, and 15 per cent are children.

While more victims are being identified, there have been fewer convictions of traffickers. The 2012 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) confirms the negative trend we observe in Europe, but also provides hope as more and more countries criminalize that activity. The *Report* is one of the most practical outcomes of the United Nations Global Plan of Action, providing the international community with data collection and biennial reporting on patterns and flows of trafficking in persons at the global, regional and national levels.

We affirm our commitment to addressing trafficking in persons in a comprehensive, holistic manner. The European Union has developed a dynamic and comprehensive legal and policy framework, not only complying with international standards, but also developing further beneficial provisions.

Trafficking in human beings is a gross violation of human rights prohibited by the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and the European Convention of Human Rights. Our approach therefore places the victim and his or her human rights at the

centre of its action to work towards the eradication of trafficking in human beings, taking into account gender aspects and the best interests of the child.

The European Union has developed, in complementarity with the national strategies of the EU member States, the EU Strategy towards the Eradication of Trafficking in Human Beings 2012-2016. It provides a coherent framework for existing and planned priorities and favours an integrated, multidisciplinary approach to addressing trafficking in human beings. The EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, who was appointed in March 2011 by the European Commission, gives overall strategic policy orientation, also in relation to third countries, and oversees the implementation of the Strategy. The EU Strategy consists of concrete and practical measures to be implemented over the next five years, and is fully in line with the United Nations Global Plan of Action, including the promotion of partnerships with international organizations.

As part of our holistic approach, we would like to underline that the prevention, prosecution of criminals and protection of victims of trafficking constitute one of the four pillars of the EU Global Approach to Migration and Mobility.

Let me underline the particular importance the EU places on the need not only to identify, assist, support, protect and compensate the victims of trafficking in persons, but also to reduce demand as a form of prevention. The European Commission has published *The EU rights of victims of trafficking in human beings* as a model for member States to develop clear, user-friendly information on labour, social, victim and migrant rights that victims of trafficking in human beings enjoy under European Union law. We would also like to underline the need for strong coordination among various responsible entities within the United Nations to make the fight against trafficking in persons more effective.

The European Union attaches great importance to the participation of civil society in efforts to address trafficking in persons. The work and action of civil society make a significant difference to the victims and survivors. We encourage all to ensure their inclusion in all relevant frameworks.

We look forward to interactive and fruitful debates during this high-level event. The summary of this meeting will undoubtedly provide a very useful contribution to the work of UNODC and all Vienna-based processes. This meeting will give momentum to renewed commitments in the fight against trafficking in persons and to the discussions on the implementation mechanism for the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Protocols.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Lundborg (Sweden): It is very nice to be here to join the General Assembly. I would like to say, first of all, that Sweden associates itself with the intervention just made by the observer of the European Union on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

Trafficking in persons is a global, cross-cutting issue that affects all regions and countries of the globe. It is domestic, regional and transcontinental in character, and affects children, men and women. It has a devastating impact on its human victims.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint exact numbers with regard to trafficking, we are talking about 25 million victims. The latest report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) tells us that in the period 2007-2010, a little less than two thirds of detected victims were women, 17 per cent were girls, 10 per cent boys and 14 per cent men. Compared with data from the period 2003-2006, we see an increase in the trafficking of children, rising from 20 per cent to 27 per cent for the period 2007-2010, two thirds of them being girls.

Trafficking in persons is not just a horrible violation of human rights, particularly those of women and children; trafficking today is also a huge and growing business. Estimates indicate that trafficking nets around $32 billion a year, making it one of the most lucrative illicit activities globally. That is money which we know will sooner or later be used to fund other forms of criminal activity, such as illicit drug trafficking, the illicit trade in small arms, and the financing of terrorism.

That is something that should be of concern to every nation, because it creates insecurity and threatens to tear at the social fabric of our society. However, unilateral solutions to a multilateral problem will only move us further away from the solution. Human trafficking, like many other issues, such as climate change and terrorism, shows little regard for borders and boundaries and must therefore be dealt with through a multilateral response.

For Sweden, combating human trafficking is an important challenge, and we recognize the importance of working through the multilateral system to combat this phenomenon. This high-level meeting represents an important point of reference and provides a crucial opportunity to mobilize political support for making progress on this matter.

Against this background, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs last year commissioned a study with the mission to help map out current efforts made through the multilateral system, as well as to explore the extent to which such work can be strengthened. As revealed in the study, there is some success to be found on the project level. In addition, civil society has very important functions. Maybe the most important role in supporting the victims of trafficking actually falls to civil society and non-governmental organizations.

The overall efforts to combat trafficking through the multilateral system are, however, fragmented, sometimes uneven, and in other cases overlapping. The need for better coordination of anti-trafficking efforts is fundamental. I would like to share some of the findings from the study on how we could overcome the fragmentation and become more efficient in combating trafficking in persons.

First, if we are to be able to effectively manage a multilateral response to trafficking, we must start by addressing the issue of resources. Today, the financial resources allocated through the multilateral system to combat the problem are tiny in comparison to the $32 billion business called human trafficking. It goes without saying that, if we are going to take the issue seriously, we have to give it the resources it requires. It will be nearly impossible to successfully implement the 2010 Global Plan of Action without much stronger political commitment and a willingness to allocate many more financial resources.

Secondly, in order to give trafficking issues a more focused approach within the multilateral system, Member States have to provide entities within the system clear directives that the issues must be part of their mission. In addition, we expect them to mandate, prioritize, coordinate and deliver results from such activities. At the same time, Member States need to improve their efforts by using the United Nations system as a whole and creating synergies where it is possible to do so. Agencies within the system that are not directly undertaking anti-trafficking activities could still make important contributions if their work were better coordinated with the ongoing global, regional and national projects being undertaken to combat human trafficking.

Thirdly, for that to happen, coordination on a global level has to be reinforced. The 2010 Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons has called for the strengthening and supporting of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT). During the past two years, ICAT has published several reports on common policies in different areas, three that have already been launched and two that have yet to be released. Those papers are very important because they give international organizations the opportunity to speak as one to actors involved in anti-trafficking activities. Sweden believes that reinforcing ICAT would have positive effects for coordination work at the global level and actively supports such an approach. Sweden has given financial support to the production of the ICAT policy papers and for their implementation on the country level.

Lastly, a key basis for making good decisions is access to sound data. Without it, the analyses made could be incorrect, thus leading to erroneous priorities and the waste of already scarce resources. Developing an effective monitoring and impact evaluation system that could supply the international community with sound data should be made a high priority. Sweden therefore welcomes the UNODC *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* for trying to achieve that objective. By providing us all with a better overview of the current situation, it creates an opportunity to develop new strategies that could potentially increase the programme's overall efficiency, effectiveness and results. In that regard, Sweden has also given final support fo: the production of the *Global Report*.

It is clear that the issue of trafficking in persons must be tackled from multiple angles and that it concerns various actors. Multilateral action is undoubtedly fundamental, but the challenge lies in enabling efficient coordination of those actors on the global, regional and national levels. Global problems require global solutions, and we in particular recognize the importance of working through the multilateral system to combat trafficking.

The fight against human trafficking is one of the greatest human rights causes of our time. For us to win the fight, it is absolutely crucial that multilateral action

as a response to human trafficking be given greater political importance and that, not least, adequate financial resources be allocated. It is not enough for us to stand in this Hall and say that we want to combat trafficking; we also have to be aware of the importance of contributing to our common work within the United Nations system.

At the same time, our response must be characterized by a more targeted approach that aims to address and create clear and strategic coordination and to build strong and coherent partnerships. We can then properly implement the Global Plan of Action and give the United Nations a clear role in combating the global scourge of trafficking in persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Canada.

Mr. Bhupsingh (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada applauds the ongoing efforts of the General Assembly and Member States to address the complex global issue of human trafficking, including through the United Nations Global Plan of Action.

The horrific crime of human trafficking impacts every nation; no country is immune. We must all work together to put an end to this modern day form of slavery. Since Canada's 2002 ratification of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the prevailing international instrument guiding action in that area, Canada has made concerted efforts to put in place effective anti-human-trafficking responses. We are also constantly seeking new ways to enhance our effectiveness.

On 6 June 2012, Canada launched its National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. The Action Plan consolidates Canada's efforts in the area and introduces new initiatives that are guided by the United Nations Trafficking Protocol and organized under the "four Ps" — prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships. Over the past several months, Canada has made significant progress in the implementation of the Action Plan, including through the development of tools to support the identification of populations that are most at risk of becoming victims of human trafficking and of places where the crime is most likely to be committed, the creation of targeted education and awareness initiatives and efforts to improve services for victims. We have also strengthened coordination with our domestic and international partners to contribute to anti-trafficking efforts at home and abroad.

(*spoke in English*)

Canada has long understood the importance of partnerships in addressing the crime of human trafficking, particularly recognizing the integral role played by civil society groups, including non-governmental organizations. Such groups are very often the first point of contact for victims and work to advocate on their behalf. Those groups possess the necessary skills and expertise to meet the needs of victims, help educate our communities and support research. Indeed, the Trafficking Protocol clearly and specifically identifies a role for civil society in combating the pernicious crime of trafficking in persons; we must all recognize that and ensure that civil society partners are an important part of the response to trafficking and the dialogue on how to improve our performance.

To that end, over the past several months the Canadian Government has met face to face with stakeholders from across the country. The information flowing from those consultations is being used to inform future Government anti-human-trafficking direction and policies under the National Action Plan. A national report on the consultations and an annual progress report on the National Action Plan will be made available to the public. Over the coming months and years, our conversation with stakeholders will continue, grounded in principles of inclusivity, transparency and openness — principles that have universal application.

To support international efforts to combat human trafficking, Canada has since 2008 provided approximately $30 million in international assistance in the Americas, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe. For example, Canada worked in partnership with the International Organization for Migration in Haiti, Peru and El Salvador, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in Central America, UNICEF in Guatemala, Fundación Renacer in Colombia, and the Salvadoran Institute for the Development of Women in El Salvador to build capacity within public institutions, civil society and the tourism sector and to provide services to victims of trafficking and their families. In South-East Asia, Canada facilitated the establishment of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Commission on Women and Children and supported anti-trafficking action plans to be implemented in several countries of the region. The

Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe also received Canada's support to establish or reinforce national referral mechanisms in a number of countries in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the South Caucasus and Central Asia and to protect and empower victims using a human rights lens.

Canada has also recognized the contribution of civil society organizations and, in 2012, presented the John Diefenbaker Defender of Human Rights and Freedom Award to Ms. Susana Trimarco and the Fundación María de los Ángeles. Ms. Trimarco's non-governmental organization is responsible for rescuing over 150 victims of human trafficking and helping them recover their livelihoods. She has been instrumental in raising awareness in Argentina and throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

To conclude, Canada urges the widest possible implementation of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, as the key international instrument guiding countries in the fight against human trafficking and is pleased to partner with others in that global effort.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Thailand.

Ms. Sirorat (Thailand): At the outset, I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for organizing this high-level meeting.

As far as Thailand is concerned, the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons is relevant and has helped guide us through our efforts to fight human trafficking. However, gaps in its implementation remain in terms of domestic, regional and international cooperation. As trafficking in persons often has cross-border dimensions that need to be addressed by countries of origin, transition and destination, it is imperative to galvanize multi-stakeholder endeavours. Only then can we ensure the effective implementation of international legal instruments, bearing in mind the best interest of victims.

The adoption of the Global Plan of Action has led to more focused efforts based on the "four Ps" by all stakeholders. But challenges remain in promoting their coherent and integrated implementation. That raises the question as to whether additional measures are required.

As long as economic disparities and poverty remain, people will still travel in search of a better life. Whereas women and girls are the most vulnerable victims, the number of male victims has risen significantly. Indeed, nowadays, it is the level of education — and not the gender — which usually indicates a person's vulnerability. We therefore need to do more to empower vulnerable groups.

To reinforce the "four Ps" approach, the Thai Government has adopted a "4+1 Ps" framework in enforcing the Global Plan of Action through prosecution, protection, prevention, partnership and policy. Mainstreamed into our 4+1 Ps framework are multi-stakeholder and victim-centred principles.

On policy, the Thai Prime Minister has reaffirmed, including at the General Assembly last year, that it is a national priority of Thailand to combat trafficking in persons. Fresh efforts have been undertaken, such as the intensification of inspection of labour recruitment and employment and cooperation to develop an Association of Southeast Asian Nations regional plan of action to combat trafficking in persons. Moreover, a central database has been initiated to collate information collected by relevant agencies and to facilitate case monitoring. Crucially, last month, the Thai Parliament approved the entire Transnational Organized Crime Act that complements the existing Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, which will soon enable ratification of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Trafficking Protocol.

On prevention, awareness-raising and training for law enforcement officers have brought about nationwide recognition of the importance of the issue. Those efforts complement preventive measures in the labour sector, including intensified prescreening of inbound and outbound migrant workers and the regularization of illegal migrant workers.

On prosecution, legal process and case monitoring have been improved with the establishment of a special Anti-Human-Trafficking Department within the Office of the Attorney General and an extradition programme initiated by the Courts. Likewise, the Department of Special Investigations and the Royal Thai Police have worked to ensure clear division of responsibilities in pursuing trafficking cases.

On protection, measures are wide-ranging, from basic necessities, on-site 24-hour medical care, and legal aid to non-formal education and vocational training. Those measures in turn generate an incentive for victims to cooperate with the authorities in pretrial discovery and in reintegration programmes. Protection initiatives have been enhanced with resources from the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Fund set up in line with the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund.

On partnership, multi-stakeholder cooperation, public-private partnerships and inter-agency alliances reflect our approach, with a key role for civil society. Thailand is committed to supporting United Nations efforts to combat the heinous crime of human trafficking. With that in mind, Thailand is pleased to announce that we will make a financial contribution to the United Nations Voluntary Trust Fund for Victims of Human Trafficking. That will be Thailand's second donation since our first donation was made in 2011.

To eradicate the heinous crime of human trafficking, having good intentions and a plan of action is unfortunately not adequate. Concrete results demand burden-sharing, mutual responsibility and multi-stakeholder cooperation. As we move forward with the Global Plan, coherence and integration must be further strengthened domestically, regionally and internationally. Resources need to be mobilized and prioritized, especially in empowering vulnerable groups and constantly raising public awareness. Legal instruments need to be user-friendly and keep pace with the advanced technology and techniques of criminals.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and other international agencies working in the area need support from all of us so that they can effectively provide the assistance that we call for, but they must also work better with States as well as with other stakeholders.

In closing, Thailand reaffirms its commitment to the Global Plan of Action and to cooperating with all stakeholders to further our common objectives.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Portugal.

Mr. Moura (Portugal): Portugal welcomes this opportunity, three years after the adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons, to appraise the progress achieved in its implementation. The Global Plan of Action remains, in our view, an effective tool for Member States and the international community to reiterate and reinforce their political will to combat trafficking in persons.

Portugal shares the views expressed by the European Union observer, but let me underline some aspects of particular significance to my country.

Trafficking in persons is a transnational crime, but it is also and fundamentally an attack on the dignity of the individual. Despite all the efforts of the international community, trafficking in persons is unfortunately not decreasing but on the rise. It is this reality that should mobilize all of us around initiatives that increase awareness of this crime, improve international cooperation and coordination in the fight against it, render punishment of criminal actors more effective, and provide aid to its victims — in a word, prevent and combat trafficking in persons in the most effective way. These are the ideas and the aims that prompted us to adopt in 2010 the Global Plan of Action on Trafficking in Persons following an intergovernmental process that Portugal was honoured to co-facilitate.

The aim of the Global Plan of Action is to fight trafficking in persons in its different aspects as closely and as effectively as possible. The Global Plan of Action is undeniably framed by existing legal instruments. Its objective has never been to duplicate or replace those existing legal instruments, namely the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its Trafficking Protocol. Nor does it undermine the relevance and importance of those legally binding international treaties; on the contrary, Portugal believes that it reinforces those instruments by promoting their universal ratification and effective implementation.

It is clear that trafficking in persons is a global phenomenon that requires a multisectoral approach. Portugal values the fact that, beyond the law-enforcement perspective, the Plan of Action includes a human rights perspective and a social development dimension, which are crucial in the fight against trafficking in persons — hence several references not only to human rights instruments and bodies, but also to the work of the special rapporteurs contained in the Plan of Action. Their contribution to fighting trafficking in persons is highlighted throughout the text. The Plan also adopts a victim-protection approach because victims should be another central element of our anti-trafficking efforts at the national, regional and international levels.

In that regard, the Plan of Action offers very concrete results in support of victims. It established the Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons. In Portugal, victims of trafficking have by law the right to enjoy a basic standard of living, to access suitable and urgent medical treatment, psychological assistance, protection, and translation and interpretation services, as well as legal services. Foreign victims have the same access to care as domestic trafficking victims. The Shelter and Protection Centre provides support to women identified as victims of trafficking, regardless of nationality, age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, marital status, political orientation or socioeconomic characteristics. That support is also extended to minors who are children of the victims.

It is clear that, as a global phenomenon, trafficking in persons cannot be tackled unilaterally; international cooperation is essential, as is regional and national cooperation. The Global Plan of Action should continue to encourage Member States, civil society and regional and international organizations to take an active stand against this crime. At the national level, the Plan can be an opportunity for countries to develop plans of action against trafficking. Portugal has already adopted two comprehensive national plans against trafficking in persons, and we value these plans as a means to effectively implement a global and integrated approach to combating this crime.

Another contribution of the Global Plan of Action is to call for the mobilization of communities and for raising awareness of trafficking in persons within civil society, the private sector and the mass media, which have enormous potential that should not be discarded in our common effort to prevent trafficking, to protect victims and witnesses, and to help to bring perpetrators to justice. Portugal has carried out several public campaigns designed to raise awareness among potential victims of sexual or labour exploitation and the public in general. Furthermore, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched its Blue Heart Campaign in the spring of 2012.

At the regional and international levels, the Plan of Action can be the framework for advocating more effective international coordination of efforts. Indeed, much has been done by numerous Member States, both nationally and in regional frameworks. Such experiences and the sharing of best practices will certainly be very valuable for many other Member States. We welcome and encourage the exchange of information on good practices among stakeholders involved in the fight against trafficking in persons at the country, regional and global level. Portugal has provided financial support for a training course conducted by UNODC and developed by United Nations experts, involving the criminal police and several departments of the Attorney-General's office. We hope to see that training course further developed in others countries.

One of the concrete outcomes of the Global Plan of Action, the *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*, has already been published by UNODC. It collects not only existing data but also best practices and lessons learned from regional initiatives and mechanisms. The *Report* is, in our view, extremely important as a contribution to informing Member States and the international community of progress made and challenges ahead in fighting this hideous crime.

Last but not least, Portugal believes that the Global Plan of Action is an opportunity for the General Assembly to look again at our common response to trafficking in persons. It can help us to take stock of achievements, and it can also encourage renewed commitments on the part of Member States to establishing consistent and sustained assistance to the survivors. In this sense, Portugal reiterates the importance of contributions to the Trust Fund for Victims of Trafficking in Persons.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Nicaragua.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): The millions of victims of trafficking in persons, a modern form of slavery, were given new hope in 2010 that their suffering would be brought to an end. The adoption of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons was a historic milestone not only for our Organization, but most of all for the lives of those human beings who have become prisoners of the greed and covetousness of those who profit from the business of trading in human beings.

As we all know, the need to adopt a global plan against human trafficking dates back many years. Under the Nicaraguan presidency of the General Assembly in 2008, led by Mr. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, the General Assembly began formal discussions on the adoption of such a plan. At that time, the issue seemed very controversial, and it was difficult to reach an agreement because many delegations did not see the need for a global plan of action. However, a group of countries led by Belarus, with the full support of the

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, decided to continue to draw the attention of the international community to the urgent need for a global plan until its adoption in 2010, which we are celebrating today. We thank the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking for their work and perseverance.

We take this important opportunity to share with the Assembly the progress that our country, under the leadership of President Daniel Ortega Saavedra, has made in that respect. Nicaragua is one of the countries that have achieved the most progress in the fight against human trafficking.

Human trafficking is the focus of the public agenda of Nicaragua's Government of reconciliation and national unity. It is also a priority of the strategic plan of the Ministry of Interior and National Police. Our legal, policy and procedural framework defines the crime of human trafficking and focuses on protection and assistance to victims and their families, in compliance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons.

We have created a national coalition against human trafficking, under the coordination of the Ministry of the Interior, as a central agency to combat human trafficking by identifying, preventing, protecting and rehabilitating victims and ensuring that the perpetrators of trafficking are punished effectively. The entities that make up the national coalition are ministries and institutions of the State, civil society organizations, Government entities and international non-governmental organizations.

Another important step was the creation of the 113 telephone line, or information help line, under the Ministry of the Family. It is available 24 hours a day; between 2009 and 2011, it received some 20,000 calls requesting information on human trafficking, mostly from border points. Through the national coalition against human trafficking, a geographical and social mapping system has been created. It is a working tool that serves as a research tool for pinpointing sites of alleged human trafficking crimes in its various forms and helps us to focus our prevention efforts and our prosecution of that crime while promoting protection mechanisms primarily for children and adolescents. We have a specialized care model for the victims of trafficking: first, rescue the victim, then provide her or him with counselling, initiate an investigation that leads to a hearing, and finally undertake social work leading to a trial.

In 2011, we achieved a 81.25 per cent rate of succesful prosecution of human traffickers in Nicaragua. Data from the specialized unit against human trafficking of the National Police show that 178 victims were rescued. To date, 33 people, including young people and children, have been released from their captors. In 2011 and 2012, 96 victims of trafficking were treated, of whom 63 were accepted into the shelter run by the Commissioner for Women. Nine adult victims were given new lives and new hope, with the support of the International Organization for Migration. Adolescent and younger girls re-enrolled in school with support from the Ministry of the Family. From 2009 to 2012, 43 cases of trafficking were successfully prosecuted.

Our fight against human trafficking is not confined to our territory. We are working hard at the regional level with Central American countries. To that end, in September 2011 the Regional Coalition to Combat Trafficking in Persons was created; it includes all Central American countries and is led by Nicaragua. Nicaragua is spearheading a campaign in Central America against human trafficking; it is an effort of the Government in conjunction with the Ministry of Interior, the Commissioner for Women and the national coalition against human trafficking. That project will be inaugurated next week in Honduras and El Salvador, and then extend to other countries of the region. For the first time, all Central American States are united under the same banner.

We have achieved great success, but we still face many challenges and difficulties. All our efforts in the fight against this evil afflicting society and our implementation of the Global Plan in our national law are reflections of the commitment of our Government of reconciliation and national unity to eradicating this evil at the global level, particularly in Central America.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.